

Edited by
Gerhard Jaritz, Juhan Kreem

The Edges of the Medieval World



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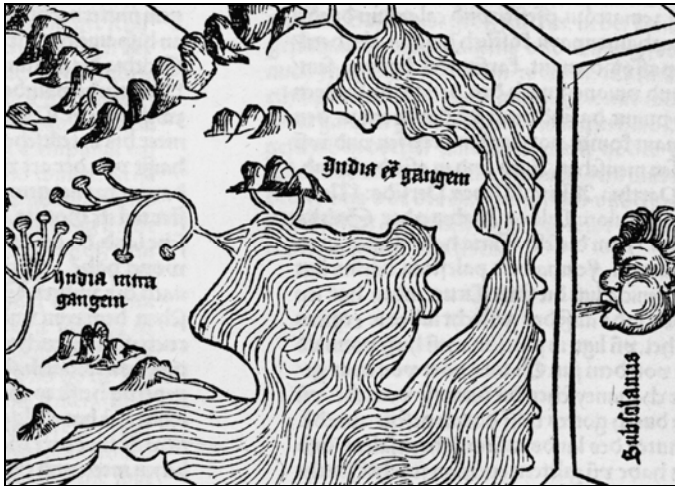
THE MUHU PROCEEDINGS 1

THE EDGES OF THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

CEU MEDIEVALIA 11

Series Editor: József Laszlovszky
Series Technical Editor: Annabella Pál

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Edited by
Gerhard Jaritz
and
Juhan Kreem

Central European University
Department of Medieval Studies
&
Central European University Press
Budapest · New York
&
Centre for Medieval Studies, Tallinn University

Budapest, 2009

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1st edition

Technical Editor: Gerhard Jaritz
Copy Editor: Judith Rasson
Cover design for the series by Péter Tóth

Cover Illustration:
India within and beyond the River Ganges
Hartmann Schedel, World Chronicle (Nuremberg, 1493), fol. 268v (detail)

Joint publication by:

Central European University
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Central European University Press
An imprint of the Central European University Share Company
Nádor u. 11, H-1051 Budapest, Hungary
Telephone: (+36-1) 327-3138, Fax: (+36-1) 327-3183
E-mail: ceupress@ceu.hu, Website: <http://www.ceupress.com>

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ISSN 1587-6470 CEU MEDIEVALIA
ISBN 978-963-9776-45-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Edges of the Medieval World / edited by Gerhard Jaritz and Juhan Kreem – 1st ed.

p. cm. – (CEU medievalia ; 11)

ISBN (pbk.) 978-9639776456

1. Middle Ages—Congresses. 2. Civilization, Medieval—Congresses. I. Jaritz, Gerhard, 1949- II. Kreem, Juhan.
III. Title. IV. Series.

D117.E34 2009
940.1—dc22

2009002787

Printed in Hungary by Akaprint Nyomda

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	vii
Preface	1
<i>Felicitas Schmieder</i> , Edges of the World – Edges of Time	4
<i>Gerhard Jaritz</i> , From the Peripheries to the Centres and Back: Visual Culture and the Edges of this World	21
<i>Else Mundal</i> , The Picture of the World in Old Norse Sources	39
<i>Torstein Jørgensen</i> , “The Land of the Norwegians is the Last in the World”: A Mid-eleventh-century Description of the Nordic Countries from the Pen of Adam of Bremen	46
<i>Anti Selart</i> , Political Rhetoric and the Edges of Christianity: Livonia and Its Evil Elements in the Fifteenth Century	55
<i>Juhan Kreem</i> , Living on the Edge: Pirates and the Livonians in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries	70
<i>Tom Pettitt</i> , Darkness on the Edge of Town: Life at the <i>Flurgrenze</i> in Medieval and Traditional Narrative	82
<i>Judit Sebo</i> , The Margins of One’s Small World: The Outskirts of Towns in Late Medieval and Early Modern Visual Representations	99
<i>Aleksander Pluskowski</i> , What Is Exotic? Sources of Animals and Animal Products from the Edges of the Medieval World	113
<i>Tom Pettitt</i> and <i>Kadri Tüür</i> , The Beast of Muhu: A Hybrid from the Periphery	130
<i>Lucie Doležalová</i> , <i>Tibi Silens Laus</i> : Silence at the Edge of Language	136
List of Contributors	142

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Felicitas Schmieder, “Edges of the World – Edges of Time”

- p. 8, fig. 1: Section from the Psalter world map: monsters on the margin
- p. 9, fig. 2: Section from the Ebstorf world map: monsters on the margin
- p. 9, fig. 3: Section from the Atlas Catalan: Noah’s Ark
- p. 10, fig. 4: Section from the Ebstorf world map: Noah’s Ark
- p. 10, fig. 5: Section from the Hereford world map: Noah’s Ark
- p. 11, fig. 6: Section from the Atlas Catalan: Queen of Sheba
- p. 11, fig. 7: Section from the Atlas Catalan: the Three Magi
- p. 12, fig. 8: Beatus of Liébana, Map from Osma: Paradise
- p. 12, fig. 9: Section from the Hereford world map: Paradise
- p. 13, fig. 10: Sections from the Ebstorf world map: Paradise and Enclosed Nations
- p. 14, fig. 11: Section from the Psalter world map: Paradise and Enclosed Nations
- p. 14, fig. 12: Section from Fra Mauro’s map: Enclosed Nations
- p. 15, fig. 13: Section from the Atlas Catalan: mountains in which Gog and Magog are said to have been enclosed at the eastern Edge of the World
- p. 15, fig. 14: Section from the atlas of Andrea Bianco: Earthly Paradise and Mongol Empires at the eastern Edge of the World
- p. 16, fig. 15: Section from the Ptolemy map as reconstructed in the 15th century: Caspian Gates

*Gerhard Jaritz, “From the Peripheries to the Centres and Back:
Visual Culture and the Edges of this World”*

- p. 23, fig. 1: A creature with long ears
- p. 24, fig. 2: Dog-headed creatures and wild men at Vézelay
- p. 25, fig. 3: *Cephos* and *Centrocosta* in the *Hortus Sanitatis*
- p. 25, fig. 4: *Draconcopedes* in the *Hortus Sanitatis*
- p. 26, fig. 5: Beasts in the Holy Land
- p. 27, fig. 6: Creatures from the edges of the world in Hartmann Schedel’s chronicle
- p. 29, fig. 7: A miraculous being with human and dog’s head in Hartmann Schedel’s chronicle

- p. 29, fig. 8: A dog-headed creature is brought to King Louis
- p. 30, fig. 9: Dog-headed cannibals in the New World
- p. 31, fig. 10: The creatures without heads, adapted by Sebastian Münster
- p. 32, fig. 11: Russian icon of the dog-headed St. Christopher
- p. 33, fig. 12: Apollonius of Tyrus on an island among wild animals and a dog-headed creature
- p. 34, fig. 13: Creature from Ethiopia with horns, a long nose and goat's feet
- p. 34, fig. 14: The devil at the appearance of the Antichrist
- p. 35, fig. 15: Creatures from India as represented in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*
- p. 35, fig. 16: Prodigies before the appearance of Muhammad
- p. 36, fig. 17: Baby with four feet in the context of the appearance of a comet
- p. 36, fig. 18: Petrus Gonsalvus and his daughter
- p. 37, fig. 19: The Florence monster in Diepold Schilling's chronicle
- p. 38, fig. 20: The Cracow monster of Pierre Boaistuau
- p. 38, fig. 21: The Cracow monster in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*

Tom Pettitt, "Darkness on the Edge of Town: Life at the *Flurgrenze*
in Medieval and Traditional Narrative"

- p. 91, fig. 1: The plan of Hull
- p. 94, fig. 2: The merchant left only with his shirt

Judit Sebo, "The Margins of One's Small World: The Outskirts of Towns
in Late Medieval and Early Modern Visual Representations"

- p. 107, fig. 1: A city of Hanns Lautensack
- p. 110, fig. 2: Wolf Huber, Watermill
- p. 111, fig. 3: Copy after Wolf Huber, The Schnecken or Linzer Gate in Passau
- p. 112, fig. 4: Copy after Wolf Huber, View of a small town

Tom Pettitt and *Kadri Tüür*, "The Beast of Muhu: A Hybrid from the Periphery"

- p. 132, fig. 1: The New Year's Goat
- p. 134, fig. 2: The head of the New Year's Goat

PREFACE

In his literary oeuvre, the Chilean writer Luis Sepúlveda (b. 1949) has concentrated on ecological topics. In 1989, he wrote *Mundo del fin del Mundo* dealing with the killing of whales in the seas off Patagonia and actions initiated against it.¹ This novel shows very well that the ends of the world need not only be something far away and therefore irrelevant for a society living in the “centre” but may also have to be seen as particularly important, and thereby near, in a number of respects touching all of humankind. In our days the same is particularly true about remote areas of the world confronted with problems of climatic change and global warming.

During our first discussions about organising a meeting on medieval “worlds at the end of the world” we soon became aware of the fact that, as is true today, the edges of the world should be seen as a phenomenon that was regularly relevant for many members of society as a whole. Moreover, often they also have to be considered in different, context-dependent, ways. For some people, they may have been understood as the areas situated at the actual fringes of the globe, for others, however, they may have been the regions outside one’s own living space, that is, territory, town, village, or even house.

Borders, limits, frontiers, and peripheries are recurring subjects in the historical disciplines, particularly in medieval studies. Not limited to the most direct geographic sense, such edges can also be found elsewhere, for instance, in the social, cultural, mental, and spiritual spheres. That also means that dealing with various medieval edges of the world may concern rather dissimilar questions to be raised and different source evidence to be analysed. The application of contextualising and comparative approaches is necessary.

This volume is the outcome of an international workshop of specialists in different fields of the historical disciplines from eight European countries. In context with its topic, the meeting was held in the village of Koguva on Muhu, the third-largest island in Estonia, a place that also represents a position on the fringes of the European Union of today. The atmosphere of the island and the village influenced the discussions and re-

¹ Barcelona: Tusquets editores, 1989, 5th ed., 2005.

sults of the meeting to a special extent. For the participants of the workshop this atmosphere became the “spirit of Muhu,” which formed the basis of an exceptionally fruitful scholarly discourse.

In her opening contribution, Felicitas Schmieder concentrates on the spatial and temporal aspects of the topic. She deals with medieval ideas about connecting the geographical edges of the world with *finis saeculi*, that is, the final events of world history. These connections were discussed mainly from the twelfth century onwards and were represented on world maps in particular. Gerhard Jaritz analyses the geographical edges of the world and the creatures living there as a construction by the society of the centre, to be seen, on the one hand, as a kind of counter-image to one’s own world. On the other hand, he also shows the proximity and relation of phenomena ascribed to the fringes and a number of, often wondrous, occurrences in one’s own society. A continuous connection was made in the textual and visual representations of far-off peripheries and the centre, that is, between familiar space and the edges of the world.

Else Mundal discovered from the analysis of Norse sources that the Vikings’ search for far-away lands and their journeys into the unknown cannot be seen in the context of any fear that they would sail over the edge. Torstein Jørgensen examines the theological perspectives of Adam of Bremen’s eleventh-century description of the land of the Norwegians as “the last in the world” and the “exceedingly fierce race of the Danes, of the Norwegians, or of the Swedes.”

Anti Selart’s contribution concentrates on the late medieval political situation at some specific edges of Christianity. He is particularly interested in the rhetoric applied to describe or create Livonia’s fifteenth-century enemies and he explains it as a part of self-imagination, which in turn encountered similar competing self-imaginings. Juhan Kreem analyses the role of pirates in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Livonia. He deals with the insecurity of their life, one of the crucial characteristics of life on the edge.

Tom Pettitt approaches the topic from the general aspect of the functional significance of edges and boundaries reflected in any cultural activities. He analyses this phenomenon with the help of medieval and traditional narrative and finds the powerful symbolic potential of the “Darkness at the Edge of Town” (Bruce Springsteen) or of the “the life at the *Flurgrenze*,” that is, the boundary itself. Judith Sebő looks for such boundaries in one’s own small world, the outskirts of towns in late medieval and early modern visual representations.

Commerce, royal gift-exchange, and aristocratic identity play the most relevant roles in Aleksander Pluskowski’s contribution on the geographic sources, import, markets, and the functions of exotic animals and animal products in medieval Europe. He shows that “exotic animals could be ‘broken down’ into a set of components – conceptually and physically – emphasising different meanings.”

At the workshop, the “beast of Muhu,” a New Year’s Goat (*näärisokk*) kept at the Muhu Museum in the village of Koguva, provided a kind of connection between the peripheries of the medieval world and the edges of modern culture. Constructed in 1950, it represents a house-visit custom during the first days of the New Year. Tom Pettitt and Kadri Tüür are conscious that one can no longer take for granted the survival of medieval and pre-medieval practices in modern folk traditions. With regard to such winter-visit customs, they are, however, able to suggest some continuity between the late medieval and modern periods.

In the final paper of the volume, Lucie Doležalová deals with silence as the edge of language, when words are not enough and unable to express properly what the speaker had in mind. She shows that the notion of the limitations of language in the Middle Ages was particularly well developed in the context of the impossibility of grasping the nature of God.

We would like to thank all the participants of the workshop and the authors of this volume for their motivation and contributions. We are also grateful to the Muhu Museum, the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Tallinn, and the Department of Medieval Studies at Central European University (Budapest) for their support and their interest in the workshop and this publication. The “spirit of Muhu” led to the idea of continuing the discussion on edges, boundaries, and margins in the medieval world and society in regular discussions of specialists and publishing them in a series, *The Muhu Proceedings*, of which this book is the first volume.

Gerhard Jaritz and Juhan Kreem
Budapest and Tallinn, January 2009

EDGES OF THE WORLD – EDGES OF TIME

Felicitas Schmieder

The first ideas that come to mind when thinking about medieval “edges of the world” presumably are conceptions of the earth being a restricted mass of land beyond which the world somehow ends – we have heard a great deal about such edges during the workshop on which this publication is based. In these conceptions, the edges of the world, represented as the margins of medieval maps of the inhabited earth, from antiquity onwards are mostly inhabited by wild, monstrous races (among the best-known are the twelfth-century so-called Psalter world map or the *Ebstorfer Weltkarte* from the thirteenth century; figs. 1 and 2¹; see also fig. 8). But *finis saeculi*, edges of the world, are not found only in medieval concepts of space, but of time as well: the medieval idea of time included its beginning when God created the world as well as its ending when He will come to earth a second time. Both concepts of edges of the world are represented in close connection to each other in these world maps, which are – it is well-known – representations of both space and time and can thus create a bridge between the imagination of both in medieval world view. They have rightly been described as a kind of painted world chronicle.² We can find Noah’s Ark, the Queen of Sheba or the Three

¹ On the Ebstorf world map see Birgit Hahn-Woernle (ed.), *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte* (Ebstorf: Kloster Ebstorf, no date [1989]) (hereafter: Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*); Hartmut Kugler (ed.), *Ein Weltbild vor Columbus. Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte. Interdisziplinäres Kolloquium 1988*, (Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1991); Jürgen Wilke, *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 2 vols. (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2001.)

² Anna Dorothee von den Brincken, “Das Weltbild der lateinischen Universalhistoriker und -kartographen,” in *Popoli e Paesi nella cultura altomedievale* (Spoleto:, 1983), vol. 1, 377-408; eadem, “‘Ut describeretur universus orbis.’ Zur Universalkartographie des Mittelalters,” *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 7 (1970), 249-78; eadem, “Mappa Mundi und Chronographia. Studien zur imago mundi des abendländischen Mittelalters,” *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 24 (1968), 118-186. – The history of medieval cartography is booming lately. Several more collected papers of colloquies are forthcoming, and collections of maps are published as well as facsimiles of single maps, medieval and early modern – all this can already be seen from the volumes quoted in notes 1, 3, 5 and 8; see also Ute Schneider, *Die Macht der Karten. Eine Geschichte der Kartographie vom Mittelalter bis heute* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004) as well as the complete series *Terrarum Orbis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001 ff.) ed. by Patrick Gautier Dalché.

Magi as well as other past figures and events in their geographical places (see, for instance, figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7³); also, far in the East, Paradise, very often with Adam and Eve inside or being driven out, and mostly with the four rivers that spring there clearly marked (figs. 8⁴, 9, 10, 11, 14). Considering the medieval framework of a world chronicle, it is not astonishing that we also find figures with a destiny for the future, and more specifically, for the end of time and thus world history. Probably the most famous of them appear on nearly every medieval world map among the races on the rims: The enclosed nations of Alexander the Great, generally identified (since Pseudo-Methodius drew the connection in the seventh century) with the endtime peoples of Gog and Magog and since the twelfth century and Peter Comestor also with the ten lost Jewish tribes from the biblical first book of Chronicles (see figs. 10, 11, 12⁵, 13, 14).⁶

And when Alexander had transited Scythia and had pushed along further east, he encountered a people that was unclean, abhorrent in view and contaminated with many kinds of magic. It devoured all sorts of horrid things, such as the meat of wild animals ... and all sorts of beast, also birds and worms – but not alone this, but also aborts and malformed foetuses, which had been received by the uterus, but not completed. They do not bury their dead, but prefer to eat them. When Alexander saw them doing all these terrible things, he got afraid that they could spread all over the world and contaminate the world. And he let them round up together with their women and children and all of their belong-

³ More on the Hereford map: Scott D. Westrem, *The Hereford Map*, *Terrarum Orbis* 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); P. D. A. Harvey (ed.), *The Hereford Map. Medieval World Maps and Their Context* (London: British Library, 2006), esp. E. and G. Wajntraub, “Noah and his family on medieval maps,” 381-88.

⁴ In reckoning the Beatus-maps of the type given here it is especially clear how densely interwoven the apostolic covering of the whole world (because each apostle and his tomb is reassigned to a certain missionary region of the *oikumene*) is with eschatological ideas: The Beatus maps form part of Beatus’ commentary of John’s apocalypses. On this special problem see Jacques Chocheyras, “Fin des terres et fin des temps d’Hésychius (Ve siècle) à Béatus (VIIIe siècle),” in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, and Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 72-81.

⁵ Fra Mauro is not actually representing Gog and Magog there, but is discussing the question whether the landscape *Hung e Mongul* is the origin of the endtime peoples’ names only to confess his disbelieving it. – On the world map by Fra Mauro and especially on the correct reading of all the many texts on it see Piero Falchetta, *Fra Mauro’s World Map*, *Terrarum Orbis* 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006) and, forthcoming in the same series, Angelo Cattaneo, *Fra Mauro’s Mappamundi and Fifteenth-Century Venetian Culture*.

⁶ Ps.-Methodius’ *Revelationes*, ed. in Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen. Pseudomethodius, Adso und die Tiburtinische Sibylle* (Halle/ Saale: Niemeyer, 1898), 59-96; now new *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, ed. W. J. Aerts and G. A. A. Kortekaas, 2 vols., *Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium* 569-570, Subsidia 97-98 (Louvain: Peeters, 1998). – Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, col.1498. – For Gog and Magog on World maps see, for a slightly later time, Andrew Gow, “Gog and Magog on Mappamundi and Early Printed Maps: Orientalizing Ethnography in the Apocalyptic Tradition,” in *Journal of Early Modern History* 2,1 (1998), 61-88.

ings, and he dispelled them from the East and drove them to the North. Then he devotedly prayed to God who answered his prayers. And God spoke to two mountains, named Promontorium and Boreum, and they moved together leaving only twelve ells of space. And Alexander built two iron gates covered with asbestos, which cannot be broken by iron and not be melted by fire ... Nobody can now reach this people, and it cannot break out anywhere. Then he pushed along with his army and reached the Caspian gates ...”⁷

This story, taken from one of several versions of the medieval (not only Latin) romance of Alexander, was included in the seventh century into the Apocalypses of Pseudo-Methodius, for whom the enclosed peoples were identical with the nations of Gog and Magog, who would, when the final times of history approached, break out in order to help the Antichrist against the Last World Emperor. Alexander’s gates were often identified with the Caspian Gates, by which the ancient geographers seemingly named the isthmus between Caucasus and Caspian Sea. From antiquity until deep into the Middle Ages, this place was considered to be nearly on the edge of the world and the Caspian Sea to be a huge bay of the *okeanos* which surrounded the inhabited world – a bay on the northeastern edge of the inhabited world, which fitted well into the descriptions of the Alexander story. And thus one can find on medieval world maps the peoples of Gog and Magog, enclosed in the Northeast behind mountains, which are frequently closed with huge and well-formed gates (Gog and Magog see above; the gates on figs. 11, 12 and also 10; only mountains 13, 14, gates named, but not necessarily depicted 15⁸).

Medieval people knew that the end of all time would arrive at some point, since this had already been prophesied in biblical writings (especially John’s Apocalypse). Since then, God had assigned the gift of prophecy to special humans, and thus people collected, considered, enlarged, and illustrated all the information on the endtime they could get, because they wanted to know as much as possible about the exact date when the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement would happen. The knowledge that doomsday was approaching could be used as a moral as well as a political warning to finally finish all the duties God had laid on mankind, among other things to reach all peoples all over the world in order to spread Christianity. Reading the signs of the time in order to find out the exact position of one’s own presence in the course of history also meant identifying all the actors known from prophecies.

⁷ *Das Buch von Alexander, dem edlen König von Makedonien. Mit den Miniaturen der Leipziger Handschrift*, ed. Wolfgang Kirsch (Leipzig: Reclam, 1991), 112–113.

⁸ There are maps of the Ptolemy type which are more detailed and on which the gates are more elaborate: On this see Laura Federzoni, “The *Geographia* of Ptolemy between the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and beyond,” forthcoming in *Aufsicht – Ansicht – Einsicht. Neue Perspektiven auf die Kartographie an der Schwelle zur Frühen Neuzeit. Kolloquium Frankfurt am Main September 2006*, ed. Gisela Engel, Tanja Michalsky, and Felicitas Schmieder (Berlin, 2008).

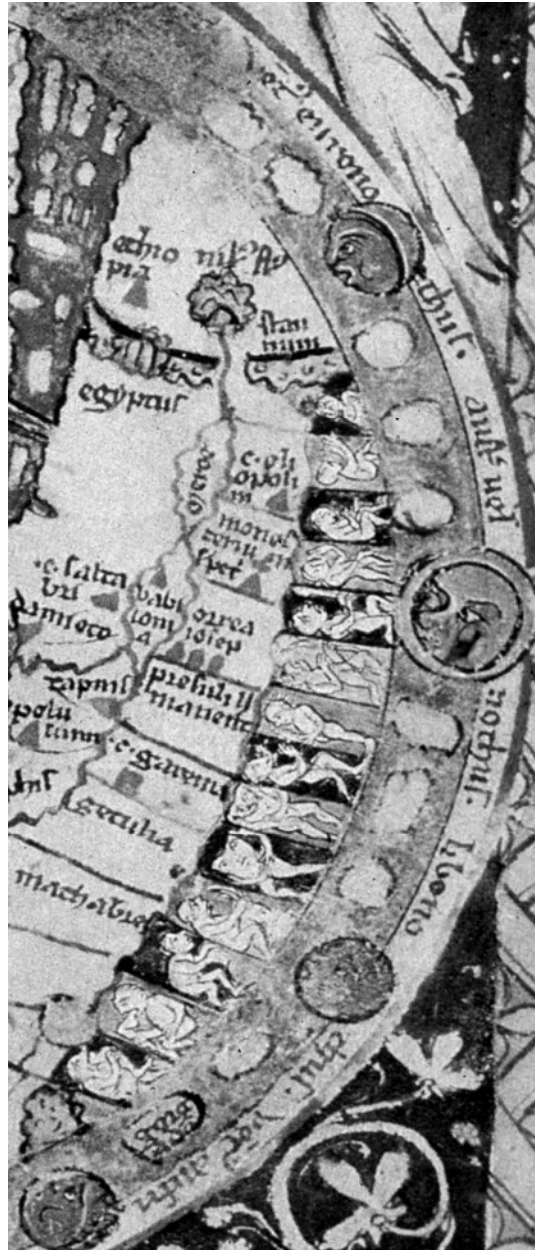


Fig. 1: Section from the Psalter world map (10 x 14 cm, Ø 8,5 cm), 13th c.
 Out of: Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 37: monsters on the margin

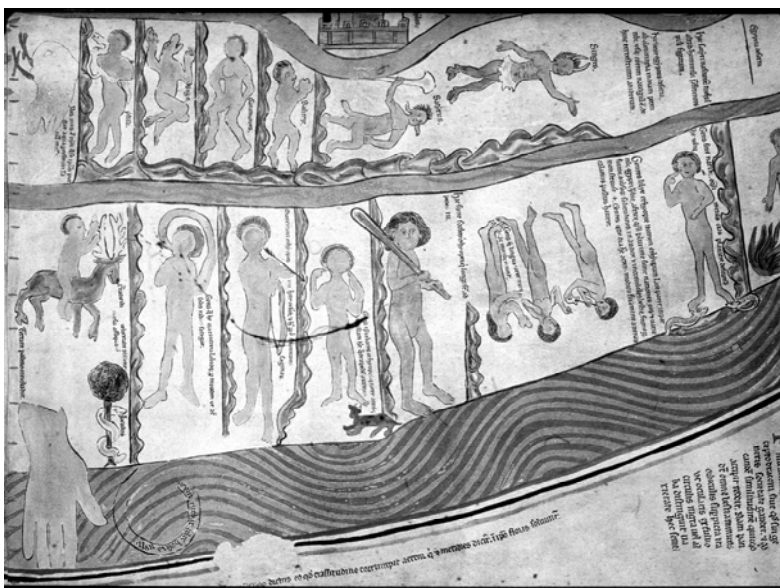


Fig. 2: Section from the Ebstorf world map (3,5 x 3,5 m, Ø ca. 3,6 m), 13th c.
Out of: Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 71: monsters on the margin



Fig. 3: Section from the Atlas Catalan (6 plates, each 69 x 49 cm), 1375.
Out of: *Atlas Catalan von 1375*, ed. and tr. Hans-Christian Freiesleben (Stuttgart:Brockhaus, 1977), plate 5:
Noah's Ark (hereafter: *Atlas Catalan*)



Fig. 4: Section from the Ebstorf world map (3,5 x 3,5 m, Ø ca. 3,6 m), 13th c.
Out of: Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 6: Noah's Ark

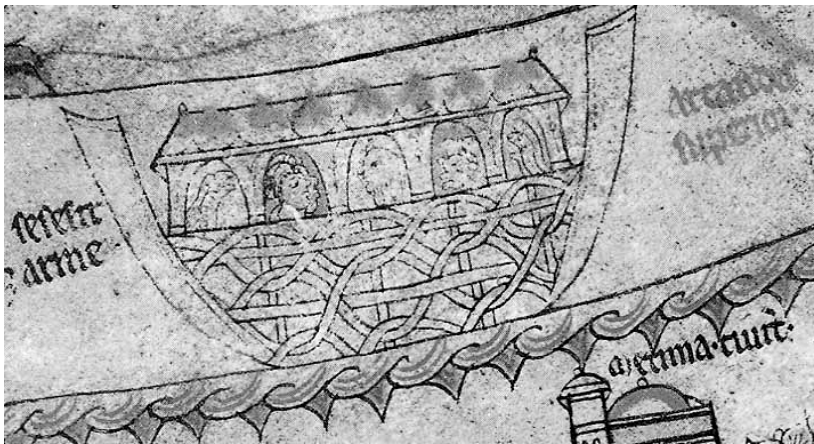


Fig. 5: Section from the Hereford world map (1,6 x 1,3 m, Ø 1,32 m), 13th c.
Out of: P. D. A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi. The Hereford Map* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 40:
Noah's Ark (hereafter: Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*)



Fig. 6: Section from the Atlas Catalan (6 plates, each 69 x 49 cm), 1375.
 Out of: *Atlas Catalan*, plate 5: Queen of Sheba



Fig. 7: Section from the Atlas Catalan (6 plates, each 69 x 49 cm), 1375.
 Out of: *Atlas Catalan*, plate 5: The Three Magi



Fig. 8: Beatus of Liébana, Map from Osma (0,3 x 0,38 m), 1203 (delineation by Konrad Miller.
Out of: Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 56: Paradise

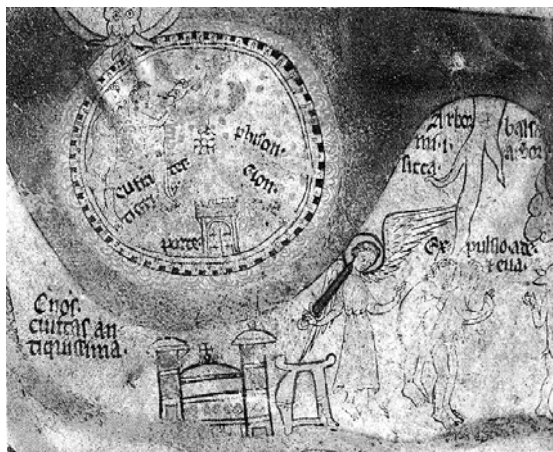


Fig. 9: Section from the Hereford world map (1,6 x 1,3 m, Ø 1,32 m), 13th c.
Out of: Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, 40: Paradise

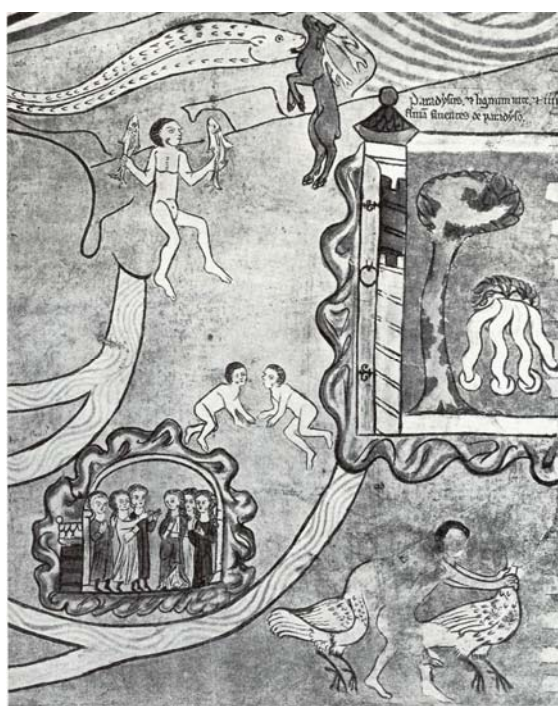
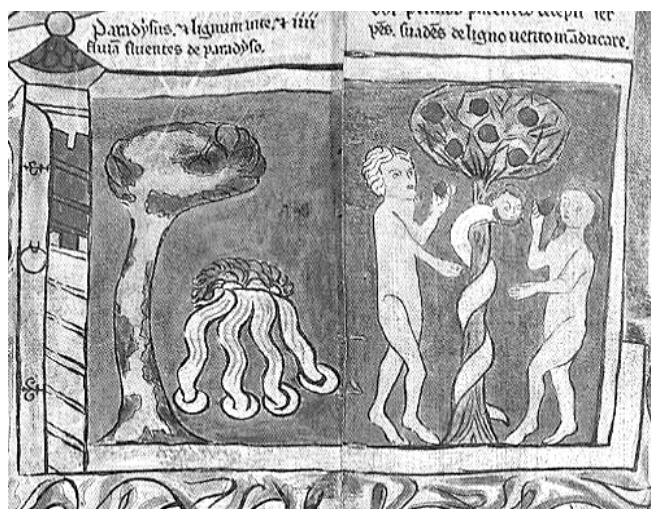


Fig. 10: Sections from the Ebstorf world map (3,5 x 3,5 m, Ø ca. 3,6 m), 13th c.
 Out of Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 49 and 65: Paradise and Enclosed Nations



Fig. 11: Section from the Psalter world map (10 x 14 cm, Ø 8,5 cm), 13th c.
Out of: Hahn-Woernle, *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, 37): Paradise and Enclosed Nations



Fig. 12: Section from Fra Mauro's map ($\varnothing$ 1,96 m), 1459. Out of: *Il Mappamondo di Fra Mauro*, ed. Tullia Gasparri Leporace (Venice: Libreria dello Stato, 1956), plate XXXVIII: Enclosed Nations



Fig. 13: Section from the Atlas Catalan (6 plates, each 69 x 49 cm), 1375. Out of *Atlas Catalan*, plate 6: Mountains in which Gog and Magog are said to have been enclosed at the eastern Edge of the World

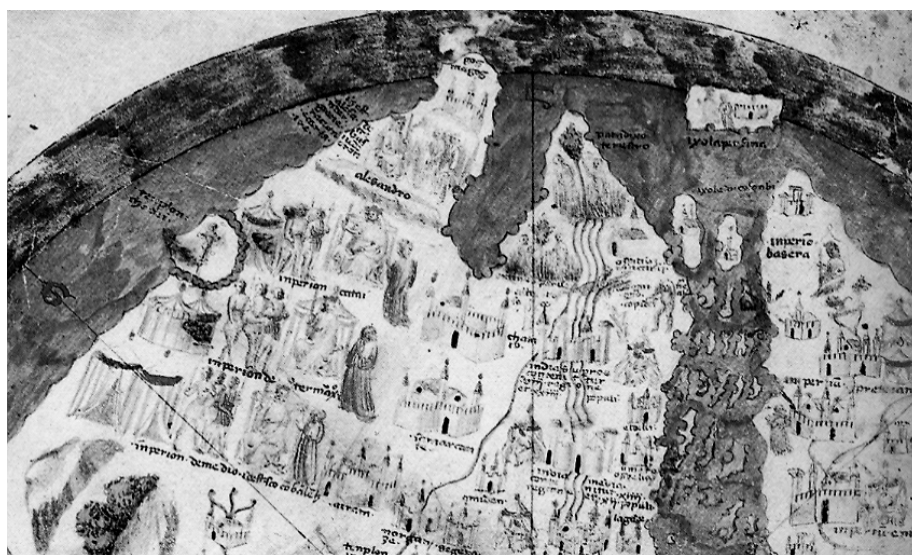


Fig. 14: Section from the atlas of Andrea Bianco, 26 x 38 cm, Ø 22,5 cm, 1436.
Out of *Andrea Bianco, Atlante nautico:1436*, ed. Piero Falchetta (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1993),
pl. 9: Earthly Paradise and Mongol Empires at the eastern Edge of the World



Fig. 15: Section from the Ptolemy map (orig. A. D. 2nd c.) as reconstructed in the 15th century (Ms. 440 x 295 mm). Out of *Ptolemäus, Cosmographia. Das Weltbild der Antike*, with an introduction by Lelio Pagani (Stuttgart: Parkland, 1990), pl. XX: Caspian Gates

Naturally, any foreign people coming violently from the North or the East, having customs differing from those of the Latin Christians, was a candidate for the role of Gog and Magog. Among others, Huns and Hungarians, and in the thirteenth century the Mongols – usually called Tartars – have all been identified with the enclosed nations of Alexander the Great that seemed to have just broken through the gates. Of course, the identifications sooner or later turned out to be false – the Huns disappeared traceless from the point of view of Westerners, the Hungarians joined Latin Christianity, and the Mongols also turned out to be wanting-to-be world conquerors, but human.⁹

While from the earlier incursions we only have scarce hints of the considerations on their identity, at the time when the Mongols came Latin Christians had already developed scholarly methods and an intense culture of quarrel. Let's hear, as an example, the voice of Henry of Harclay, chancellor of the University of Oxford at the beginning of the fourteenth century – some seven decades after the Mongol incursion. He uses the constant misinterpretations and especially the latest in order to contest too precise

⁹ Felicitas Schmieder, "Christians, Jews, Muslims – and Mongols. Fitting a Foreign People into the Western Christian Apocalyptic Scenario," *Medieval Encounters* 12 (2006), 274–295 (hereafter: Schmieder, "Christians").

calculations of the endtime (considered heretical by him and others at that time, a habit that never had a chance to win the day):

Concerning the fact that you can so often find the claim that the chasm of Alexander has been broken and the Tartars have come out there announcing the end of the world ... I would like to stress that already before the times of Isidor – and this means already 700 years ago – the chasm of Alexander was broken, as he himself says in the 7th book of the *Etymologiae*, chapter 1 – namely that the Huns, who afterwards were called Hungarians, then collected the Bulgarians and other northern nations, broke through the chasm of Alexander, and tribute was solved to them up to Egypt, and they destroyed the land up to France. Hence, they were of major power than the Tartars. Had all these brilliant know-it-alls [here he means his colleagues] lived at that time of Isidor, they would have said that the world would immediately be ending, while it existed 700 more years, without showing any more sign of ending than before.¹⁰

While Henry is contesting prophetic calculations as such – but not the existence of the gates or the coming of the endtime at some point in principle – others were trying to clarify the contradiction on a different level that did not touch the expectations themselves. At approximately the same time as Henry of Harclay, the northern Italian chronicler Jacopo d'Acqui found, in his *Imago mundi*, the following solution: The Tartars were actually among the nations enclosed by Alexander, but they were not enclosed as firmly as the others, and thus they managed to escape now.

It is true that they, when they first came out of the mountains, were eating all sorts of animals. But soon they ate only good and healthy ones, because they in many ways corrected the horrid habits they had had inside the mountains, and they are now normal humans.¹¹

The others, however, that were enclosed more firmly, will have to wait until the end of time before they can break out. In this attempt you can find the true and serious effort of getting the world view into order. It only sounds similar to the one we can find, at the same time, from the Franciscan John Eleemosina.¹² For him, it is Gog and Magog themselves who are identical with the Tartars, who had changed their habits and become nice and friendly people favourable towards Christian missionaries. While he seems to have undocked Gog and Magog themselves from their role in endtime, Jacopo d'Acqui was a serious believer trying to reconcile as many explanations as possible and

¹⁰ Franz Pelster (ed.), “Die Quaestio des Heinrich von Harclay über die zweite Ankunft Christi und die Erwartung des baldigen Weltendes zu Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts,” *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 1 (1951), 25–82, here 73.

¹¹ Jacopo d'Acqui OP, *Chronica ymaginis mundi, ab OC–1290*, in *Monumenta Historiae Patriae V, Scriptores III*, ed. Gustavo Avogadro (Turin: Reg. Typograph., 1840), cols. 1357–1626, here 1558.

¹² Johannes Eleemosina, *Chronik*, partially edited in Girolamo Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente Franciscano*, 5 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegio di S. Bonaventura., 1906–1927), II, 103–37, here 120.

find an explanation that saves the identification of the Tartars as peoples of Alexander and the knowledge of what would happen at the far edge of the world once the world had come to its end.

For most Latin Europeans the Mongols were and remained known to live in the Far East or also Northeast of the world – where, as the first traveller to the Mongols, John of Plano Carpini, put it c. 1248, North and East meet.¹³ As geographical knowledge grew, people knew that the Mongol empire began immediately beyond the borders of Latin Christianity, but ranged up to the edges. Considering that even the Venetian senate, well aware of the existence of a huge land mass beyond the Black Sea region where Venetian and other Italian merchants as well as Latin European missionaries were frequent guests, was speaking of the colonies on the Crimea and at the mouth of the River Don as existing *in confinia mundi et in faucibus inimicorum nostrorum*¹⁴ – at the end of the world and in the throats of our enemies.

And since they dominated the East up to the rim, they remained dominant in imagination and important for the endtime of the world, somehow (though not as endtime nations) connected to it. In his Apocalypse Pseudo-Methodius also introduced the Last (Greek-Roman) World Emperor (against whom Gog and Magog would rise).¹⁵ According to the legendary tradition this emperor would, after having finished fighting, lay down his crown and shield (sometimes his sceptre as well) at Golgatha, and then the dry wood of the cross would grow green again. As time went by this story got mixed with the one of a Dry Tree as the place of the very last battle in history. According to a thirteenth-century prophecy, the Tartars would be, for the last battle, driven to the Dry Tree at the farthest eastern end of the world – where then, on Easter, the pope would celebrate a mass and the tree would grow green again. A pilgrim's report from the Holy Land written around 1340 knows that the Dry Tree – where once the Roman emperor was supposed to hang his shield – stands in the realm of the Tartar emperor.¹⁶ It is well guarded, since it guarantees power over all the world to the one mighty king who manages to hang his shield on it, as has it the Carmelite John of Hildesheim in his legend of the three Magi twenty years later.¹⁷ A nearly insoluble mixture of legendary motives

¹³ *Ystoria Mongalorum* I, 3, in *Sinica Franciscana I: Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, ed. Anastasius van den Wyngaert (Quaracchi: S. Bonaventura, 1929), 3-130, here 29.

¹⁴ *Misti* by the Venetian senate for the year 1436: Freddy Thiriet (ed.), *Régestes des d'libérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie (1329–1463)*, 3 vols. (Paris: Mouton, 1958-61), rég. nr. 2412, III, p.51.

¹⁵ On this crucial figure of endtime, Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000).

¹⁶ Ludolf of Suchem, *De itinere Terrae Sanctae liber*, ed. Ferdinand Deycks (Stuttgart: Literarischer Verein, 1851), 58 (and others with him or similarly).

¹⁷ Johannes of Hildesheim, *Historia trium regum*, ed. lat. and middle Engl. C. Horstmann (Millwood: Kraus Reprints, 1988), 299.

have one thing in common; they place the Dry Tree, which is in itself closely connected to the end of times, close to the eastern edges of the world and thus to the Mongols.

And why not, then, supposing the Tartar emperor to be the wished-for Last Emperor? If you consider this too much of a good thing, you are in error: The Franciscan prophet John of Rupescissa (Jean de Rocquetaillade) explicitly connected the eastern-most Tartar emperor (whom he considered a Christian) to a type of Last Emperor in the mid-fourteenth century.¹⁸ Another Carmelite at the same time at least expected the boy who would grow to be the Last Emperor to be born *ultra Tartaros*.¹⁹

But, yes, in general the edges of the world are not the place where good things are expected to come from. The same John of Rupescissa is far from being sure about the Tartars and their role in the endtime. He himself, as a young man, had a vision which showed him baby Antichrist just born in the city of Zayton.²⁰ This town really existed in the Mongol Empire of China and was (in the first half of the fourteenth century) a Franciscan bishopric on the borders of the Chinese Sea²¹ – hence on the very edge of the world.

The Mongols, this should have become clear, could be considered apt for many roles connected with the (last) edge of time as well as the (eastern) edges of the world. And although some of the roles tend towards a positive, inclusive standing, these remain few, while foreignness and the expectation of, in the end, a standing on the other side is prevalent. To a certain extent this result can also be traced on medieval world maps: Again, the fifteenth-century map by Andrea Bianco (fig. 14) has, on the eastern edge of the world, two branches of land (there are three in all, the third one being Africa reaching far to the East and being separated from Asia by a narrow sea with many islands, a very usual feature on world maps of the time as well). On one we can see the Earthly Paradise, on the second we have already recognized the enclosed nations of Alexander the Great. Immediately below his walls, that is, immediately further west, we can see three groups of peoples, one always further west – or east, if you look from the European point of view – than the other: These are three different Tartar tribes, each obviously living in tents and assembled around a throne. Most eastwards is represented

¹⁸ Johannes de Rupescissa (= Rocquetaillade), *Liber Ostensor quod adesse festinant tempora*, ed. Clemence Thévenaz Modestin and Christine Morerod-Pattebert (Rome: École française de Rome, 2005) (hereafter: *Liber Ostensor*) (= Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Ross. 753, fol. 50r; latin text commented in: Felicitas Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden. Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), 280 with n.431) (hereafter: Schmieder, *Europa*). For the context, see Schmieder, “Christians”.

¹⁹ William of Bloomfield, ed. in Robert E. Lerner, “The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities,” in *American Historical Review* 86 (1981) 533-52, here 552.

²⁰ *Liber Ostensor* VII, 3, 372 (= Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Ross. 753, fol. 55r; comments by Schmieder, *Europa*, 279, n. 428; Schmieder, “Christians.”

²¹ For the context of missionary history see Jean Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'orient au Moyen Age (XIIIe – XVe siècles)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1977).

the *imperium catai* (China), below the Central Asian and then the western Asian/ Russian empire of the later so-called Golden Horde.

Besides the fact that this is representing good Western knowledge of Mongol history, it could almost be considered a pictorial representation of the quoted ideas of Jacopo d'Acqui, who took the Tartars as close relatives of those still enclosed behind Alexander's walls. Or are we, here, recovering another hierarchy of foreignness like the one the Italian poet Andrea da Barberino described towards the end of the fourteenth century? His hero *Guerrino il Meschino* travels further and further east, thus approaching the edges of the world. At first, he meets a Tartar people of merchants, but the further east he goes, the wilder the people are, huge and cloddish, no longer accepting merchants – and, finally, there are said to be some Tartars with dog heads.²² All this shows, among other things, the need for categorizing the known world and its inhabitants into those who are „us“ or at least close to us, and those who are more or less foreign up to entirely hostile and are living (hopefully) far away on the edge of the world.

Consequently, in this eschatological framework a line can also be drawn, already in the thirteenth century, between “us, the Europeans” and “them, the non-Europeans, who have to stay outside if we want to save our own well-being” – especially in time of crisis, when it really seemed necessary, *sub specie aeternitatis*, to collect forces and to close ranks. Thus, as a finishing glance, I will present you the first political definition of “Europe” of the late Middle Ages, which was gaining weight from its eschatological framework.

Alexander of Roes, a German cleric from Cologne wrote his *Notitia saeculi* in 1288.²³ Methodically, Alexander includes a circular concept of history (well-known from antiquity) into the usual progressive medieval concept. As on the Wheel of *Fortuna*, those who have reached the top have to fall deeply, but while rolling on its way history is at the same time turning like a screw towards the Last Judgement. Alexander interprets history in the framework of an older prophecy, *de semine Scripturarum*, “The seed of Characters,” which prophesied the approach of the end in steps of hundred years, each matching one letter of the alphabet: The century between 1215 and 1315 corresponded

²² Guerrino detto il Meschino, *Storia delle grandi imprese e vittorie riportate contro i Turchi di Carlo Magno imperatore re di Francia* (Naples: Bideri, 1939).

²³ Alexander von Roes, *Noticia Saeculi*, ed. Herbert Grundmann and Hermann Heimpel, MGH Staatsschr. 1.1 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1958), 149-171, here 152-153; see Felicitas Schmieder, “Der mongolische Augenblick in der Weltgeschichte oder: Als Europa aus der Wiege wuchs,” in *Produktive Kulturkonflikte*, ed. Felicitas Schmieder, *Das Mittelalter* 10/2 (2005), 63-73, and in English on CD-ROM as a contribution to the Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, Sydney 2005; eadem, “Two unequal brothers split and reunited – The Greeks in Latin Eschatological Perceptions of Politics and History before and after 1204,” in *Quarta crociata. Venezia – Bisanzio – Impero latino*, ed. Gherardo Ortalli, Giorgio Ravegnani, and Peter Schreiner (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2006), 633-651.

to the letter X, so time was running towards its end, although it was not to be expected immediate. However, events showed that it was high time to bring the world into order.

Alexander is not interested in the far away edges of the world, but he draws his own clear lines between inside and outside, and thus creates much closer edges of his world. Inside, that were the four major realms (*regna principalia*) of Europe, *regnum Romanorum* in the South, *Francorum* in the North, *Hispanorum* in the West, and *Grecorum* in the East. For the outside, Alexander shares the view of his time of a world that had grown much larger than in the centuries before – a view that could, as we have seen, give birth to the idea of expecting the Last Emperor from the far away edges of this larger world. But Alexander would never support such an idea and sees the dangers of openness more than the opportunities. He was actually very well informed. The Mongols, among others, were considered important, but just as one among other threats from outside for the one thing that really counted: *Europa*.

All the *tribulationes* expected to hit the world in the tenth century – and expected to show how the world was coming closer and closer to its end – were already jeopardizing European soil. The Mongols had once again attacked Hungary and Poland in the 1280s, the Muslims had fought for the straits of Gibraltar from 1275 on (thus, not only on the East, but on all the rims of Europe the danger was obvious – even from the North it was the Sea which attacked the Christian land by huge floods), and the Byzantine Emperor Michael Palaiologos (*violentus occupator imperii Grecorum*) had violently occupied the Greek realm in 1261. This emperor, who in his own view, of course, was a legitimate re-conqueror of his heritage, was from outside seen as an occupier from outside, since only a Greek people under the right, meaning the Latin, rule could be part of Alexander's Europe – a Europe deep in crisis not the least because the Greeks as its most threatened part were floating between inside and outside. It is the too wide world Alexander excludes. He is drawing the border line (*terminos Europae*) excluding several real, well-known foreign peoples, among them the Mongols. This was also a reaction to the much more detailed knowledge about the edges of the world.

The idea of this article is to look at the edges of the world in a temporal sense, but at the same time connect them in a spatial sense. The closest possible connection is represented on medieval world maps. But we have seen other options of enlarging the images of endtime by the growing knowledge of late medieval Latin Europe about the geographical eastern edges of the world – a growing knowledge which could also lead to an exclusion of width and foreignness and create a description of a smaller world with clear edges of its own.

FROM THE PERIPHERIES TO THE CENTRES AND BACK AGAIN:
VISUAL CULTURE AND THE EDGES OF THIS WORLD

Gerhard Jaritz

Fabulous creatures and savage barbarians were the most significant beings from the edges of the world that could be encountered in a variety of sources in different historical periods.¹ They appeared in ancient Greek and Roman thought, in the texts of early Christian authorities, and in literary, historical and scientific works by medieval and early modern authors, often illustrated to clarify the message and increase its effect. Such creatures lived far away – at the end of the seas, in the East, in India, Africa and, later, also in the Americas. The *monocoli*, for instance, were swift one-legged beings that could protect themselves from the heat of the sun in the shade of their big foot, and the *phanesii*, also called *panotti* (fig. 1),² had huge ears in which they wrapped themselves against the cold – based on Pliny, who relates that in an area off Scythia, called the “All-Ears Islands,” the natives had large ears that covered their whole bodies.

From the High Middle Ages onwards particularly, a kind of popularisation and broader dissemination of these beings can be traced in written texts as well as in visual representations. An early example of this public popularisation and familiarisation is the

¹ From the large amount of secondary literature, see generally, e. g., Rudolf Wittkower, “Marvels of the East. A Study in the History of Monsters,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 159-197; Heinz Mode, *Fabulous Beasts and Monsters* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1973); John C. Allen, “Lands of Myth, Waters of Wonder: The Place of the Imagination in the History of Geographical Exploration,” in *Geography of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geosophy*, eds. David Cowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 41-61; John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Maria Aranda and Maryse Vich-Campos, eds., *Des mostres. Actes du colloque de mai 1993 à Fontenay aux Roses* (Fontenay-St. Cloud et al.: École Normale Supérieure, 1994); Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, eds., *Dämonen, Monster, Fabelwesen* (St. Gallen: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998); Claude Lecouteux, *Les monstres dans la pensée médiévale européenne*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999); Michaela Schwegler, „Die Darstellung von Wundertieren auf frühneuzeitlichen Einblattdrucken,” *Fabula* 43 (2002): 227-250.

² Detail from the end-thirteenth-century Hereford *Mappa Mundi*:
<http://204.204.253/myth/panotti.htm> (last access September 15, 2008).

tympanon of the central portal of the Benedictine abbey church of Saint Mary Magdalene at Vézelay in Burgundy (c. 1130). There, the peoples and monstrous creatures from the edges of the world represent the pagans to be converted to Christianity. Visible among them are Siamese twins, figures with the snouts of pigs, and two dog-headed creatures beside wild men (fig. 2).³



Fig. 1: A creature with long ears

The bestiaries and then the popular natural historical encyclopedias of the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period took these creatures and constructed their visual representations based on the descriptions of the authorities, who sometimes gave only scarce information. In a *Hortus Sanitatis*, printed in 1497, for instance, the *Cephos* and *Centrocosta* appear (fig. 3);⁴ Pliny says only that the *Cephos* lived in Ethiopia and had feet and legs like humans. The artist created a humanlike naked male figure with the head of a bloodhound. Pliny and Solinus stated that the *Centrocosta* had the body of a donkey, a breast and legs like a lion, a broad mouth going from one ear to the other, and a human-like voice. Thus, the descriptions often offered greater freedom for the visual representation of the creatures. The *Draconcopedes* (fig. 4),⁵ following Thomas of Cantimpré's *Liber de natura rerum* (1230-1245), is represented as a serpent with the face

³ *Images of Medieval Art and Architecture, France: Vézelay, Benedictine Abbey Church of Sainte Marie Madeleine, Peoples on Tympanum of Central Portal in Narthex*: <http://vrcoll.f.a.pitt.edu/medart/menufrance/vezelay/portals/vezportalpeoples.html> (last access September 15, 2008).

⁴ *Hortus Sanitatis*, Strassburg: Johannes Prüss d.Ä., 1497, *Tractatus de animalibus*, cap. xxxviii.

⁵ *Hortus Sanitatis*, *Tractatus de animalibus*, cap. xlix.

of a virgin, making it credible that it had been the animal as which the devil had seduced Eve in Paradise.



Fig. 2: Dog-headed creatures and wild men at Vézelay



Fig. 3: *Cephus* and *Centrocosta* in the *Hortus Sanitatis*



Fig. 4: *Draconcopedes* in the *Hortus Sanitatis*

Late medieval pilgrimage reports began containing woodcuts with creatures from the edges, like the well-known end-of-the-fifteenth-century example by Bernard of Breydenbach, who had travelled to the Holy Land in 1483/84 and whose report was illustrated and published by Erhard Reuwich in 1486.⁶ An illustration shows the beasts living in the Holy Land, among others, the unicorn and the wild man: *non constat de nomine* (fig. 5).⁷

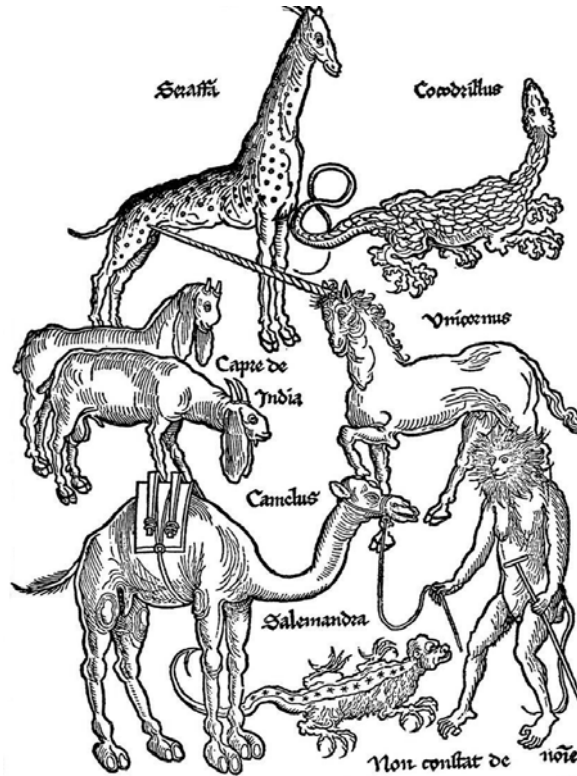


Fig. 5: Beasts in the Holy Land

One should also consider the printed chronicles like, for instance, Hartmann Schedel's well-known and very popular *World Chronicle* (Nuremberg, 1493), published in Latin as well as in the vernacular, in which he adopted a large amount of textual and visual information from other authors. Concerning the beings from the edges of this

⁶ Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam - deutsche Ausgabe von 1486*, facsimile with a commentary by Andreas Klußmann (Saarbrücken: Verlag Fines Mundi, 2008).

⁷ Erhart Reuwich, *Beasts in the Holy Land*, 1486; out of Rüdiger Robert Beer, *Einborn. Fabelwelt und Wirklichkeit* (Munich: Callwey, 1972), 112.

world (fig. 6),⁸ he emphasised, following Pliny word by word, that “there are many ‘humans’ to be found in the Histories, very different from the ordinary nature of man and mostly living far away at distant seas. They are estimated as wondrous and incredible. But, who would believe that there are blackamoors, if one had not seen them. Many things are held impossible before one has seen them.”⁹



Fig. 6: Creatures from the edges of the world in Hartmann Schedel's chronicle

⁸ Hartmann Schedel, *Weltchronik* (Nuremberg, 1493; reprint Grünwald bei München: Verlag Konrad Kölbl, 1975), fol. 12v.

⁹ Schedel, *Weltchronik*, fol. 11v: *So werden auch sunst vil gestaltuns der menschen von dem gewönllichen lawff der natur außschwaffende und allermaist weyt vom meer wonende in den historien gefunden und vil menschen wundersam und unglewplich geachtet. Dann welcher wolt glawben dz morn wern so er die nit gesehen het. Oder welchen menschen bringen sie nit ein verwunderung der zu ersten einen morn sihet. Vil ding werden unmöglich geachtet vor unnd ee sie gesehen.*

In the same period of this increasing interest in the textual and visual representation of life at the geographical borders of the known world and the creatures there, expanding curiosity was expressed concerning wondrous situations and events in the centre, that is, in one's own society, in written as well as, increasingly, visual form.¹⁰ Fabulous stories about past and present wonders and prodigies, miraculous signs, and monstrosities became more and more popular. Such stories appear in many kinds of chronicles, often illustrated, seen as worthy of mediation to one's readers and beholders. The sixteenth century saw a climax of this interest in the specific collections of prodigies that functioned as both warnings and predictions concerning problems that might occur in the future.

The constructions of fabulous creatures from the edges of the world merged with those in one's own society in such works. The wondrous beings and monsters occurring in or created for the centres of this world may be seen as apparent relatives or reversed copies of the creatures from the edges of this world. Thereby, for instance, India could get very close to Germany or Italy. Based on authorities, Hartmann Schedel's *World Chronicle* records and illustrates, on the one hand, a description of the creatures from the fringes (fig. 6) like, for instance, of the dog-headed beings: "In the lands of India there are humans with dog heads that talk to each other by barking, feed themselves by catching birds and are dressed in animal skins."¹¹ On the other hand, Hartmann Schedel mentions a number of prodigies, natural catastrophes and miraculous signs that had occurred in Europe. Among them is, for 1228, the story about a woman who had given birth to a miraculous being of two bodies with a human face in the front and a dog's face in the back (fig. 7).¹²

In 1503, the humanist Jakob Mennel, member of the circle around Emperor Maximilian I, wrote his *De signis, prodigiis et portentis antiquis et novis*, which remained unpublished and can be understood as an example of "humanist spiritualism." It contains a large number of descriptions and illustrations of divine and heavenly miraculous signs that were seen as warnings of bad or dangerous events in the future.¹³ There, he presents the illustrated story of a dog-headed creature (fig. 8)¹⁴ in Italy that was taken to King Louis, referring to the Carolingian Louis II, king of Italy from c. 839/40 (+ 875).

¹⁰ See Rebekka Habermas, "Wunder, Wunderliches, Wunderbares," in *Armut, Liebe, Ehre. Studien zur historischen Kulturforschung*, ed. Richard van Dülmen (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag), 58-66.

¹¹ Schedel, *Weltchronik*, fol. 12r: *In dem land India sind menschen myt hunds köpfen und reden peltende, neren sich mit vogelgefeng und klaiden sich mit thierbeventen.*

¹² Schedel, *Weltchronik*, fol. 198r.

¹³ See Tanja Reinhardt, "Die habsburgische Heiligen des Jakob Mennel," phil. Diss. (Freiburg i. Br.: Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, 2002), 63. Concerning Jakob Mennel, see also Wolfgang Irtenkauf, "Jakob Mennel, Hofgenealog Kaiser Maximilians I," in *Literatur und bildende Kunst im Tiroler Mittelalter*, ed. Egon Kühlebacher (Innsbruck: AMCE, 1982), 53-66.

¹⁴ Vienna, Austrian National Library, cod. 4417, fol. 9v (photo: Institut für Realienkunde, Krems).

spitzen erschynen am himel. die
n ganze himel. So fielen stern
fer darauff gosse so gaben sie

hinter. dē volget er groſſe tew/
vil lewt vnd vil starben vnd
ten.

En welschē landē w3 ein
Erdbidē. xl. tag. der keret
die dōſſer vmb.

Der mond wardt bey
nacht versinstert vnd
plātſar.

Ein weib gepate ein wi
der gestalt zwifachs
leibs. vornen eins menschen
vnd hinten eins hundes
angeseht habende.

Johannes von der zeit
was des groſſen Karls wappē maister gewesen vnd
lebet. ccc. lxi. iar vnd starb.



Fig. 7: A miraculous being with human and dog's head in Hartmann Schedel's chronicle



Fig. 8: A dog-headed creature is brought to King Louis

Some species of the wondrous creatures specific to the edges of the world occurred in one's own society more often than others. This was particularly true for the dog-headed beings. They turn up regularly in representations of the edges of the world as well as in the centre; and when new edges of the world emerged, dog-headed figures were among the first ones discovered to live there.



Fig. 9: Dog-headed cannibals in the New World

In 1530, Lorenz Fries' *Underweisung und uszlegung der Cartha Marina* ... dealt with Christopher Columbus' discoveries and tells, as had Columbus himself, about the cannibals "on one of the islands (that is Cuba) having been discovered by Columbus a few years ago." They had a terrible appearance with heads similar to dogs. The title page

illustration of the publication represents dog-headed people, showing them at their cannibalistic kitchen work (fig. 9).¹⁵

The centre also disseminated other fabulous beings to the new edges of the world. This may be found, for instance, in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (first published in 1544). There, one finds the well-known headless figures with their faces on their chests in the traditional areas of Asia; they now also occur, however, in the Amazon region (fig. 10).¹⁶



Fig. 10: The creatures without heads, adapted by Sebastian Münster, this time shown as living in the Amazon area

Saint Christopher was a dog-headed saintly creature that became important and, thereby, also part of the center in certain areas of Europe. In the *Legenda Aurea* he is described as a giant with a terrifying appearance. In other hagiographic texts he is documented as having a face like that of a dog or as a member of the North African tribe of the *Marmaritae* and one of the Dogheads, a race that had the heads of dogs and

¹⁵ Lorenz Fries, *Underweisung und auslegung der Cartha Marina oder die mer carten* (Strassburg: Johannes Grieninger, 1530), title page: http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/etexts/mendel/images/g95-f9-v5_00001.shtml (last access September 15, 2008). See also Joseph Jurt, "Die Kannibalen: erste europäische Bilder der Indianer – von Kolumbus bis Montaigne," in *Der Alteritätsdiskurs des Edlen Wilden*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002), 45–63.

¹⁶ Aus: Günther Wessel, *Von einem, der dabei blieb, die Welt zu entdecken. Die Cosmographia des Sebastian Münster oder Wie man sich vor 500 Jahren die Welt vorstellte* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 2004), 44.

ate human flesh.¹⁷ In the Eastern Church, this dog-headed appearance of Saint Christopher also became important in his visual representation, from as early as the fifteenth century until modern times (fig. 11).¹⁸



Fig. 11: Russian icon of the dog-headed St. Christopher

Dog-headed creatures also found their way into illustrations of late medieval literature as, for instance, a 1467 version of the well-known adventure-romance “Apollonius of Tyrus”, written by Heinrich of Neustadt (c. 1300). Returning from Assyria by ship, Apollonius reached an island where a number of wild animals lived: leopards, lions, panthers, unicorns, wisents, bears, boars, elephants, and camels. The illustration of the text shows wild animals, but to some extent different from the written

¹⁷ David Woods, *Saint Christopher* (1999): <http://www.ucc.ie/milmar/Christopher.html> (last access September 15, 2008).

¹⁸ Post-medieval Russian icon of the dog-headed Saint Christopher; out of Anthony Weir, *A Holy Dog and a Dog-Headed Saint. St. Guinefort and St. Christopher Cynephoros Cynocephalus*, <http://www.beyond-the-pale.co.uk/dogsaints.htm> (last access September 15, 2008), p. 7.

information. One of these differences is the small dog-headed creature depicted behind the unicorn (fig. 12).¹⁹



Fig. 12: Apollonius of Tyrus on an island among wild animals and a dog-headed creature

Images of other beings from the edges of the world may also be seen as directly or indirectly related to figures from the centre. The creatures with horns, goat's feet, and

¹⁹ Heinrich of Neustadt, *Apollonius of Tyrus*, Austrian, 1467. Vienna, Austrian National Library, cod. 2886, fol. 37v (photo: Institut für Realienkunde, Krems).

a long nose that lived in Ethiopia, here the one in Hartmann Schedel's *World Chronicle* (fig. 13),²⁰ could come very close to devils in appearance (fig. 14).²¹



Fig. 13: Creature from Ethiopia with horns, a long nose and goat's feet



Fig. 14: The devil at the appearance of the Antichrist

²⁰ Schedel, *Weltchronik*, fol. 12r: *Item in dem land Ethiopia ... etlich haben börner, lang nasen und gayßfüß, das findest du in sand Anthonius ganzzer legend.*

²¹ *Ibidem*, fol. 259v: Devil grasping a human at the appearance of Antichrist.

Such a phenomenon can also be recognised, even more explicitly, in the Siamese twins or all the beings with two bodies or more than two arms, hands, legs or feet. Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (fig. 15)²² shows Siamese twins living in India in company with other well-known creatures from the edges of the world. These conjoined twins are also regularly described and visually represented as marvels in the centre: in Schedel's chronicle, for instance, as a portentous sign in the period before the appearance of Muhammed (fig. 16).²³ Jakob Mennel's *De signis, prodigiis et portentis antiquis et novis* records a baby with four feet in the context of the appearance of a comet (fig. 17).²⁴



Fig. 15: Creatures from India as represented in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*



Fig. 16: Prodigies before the appearance of Muhammad

²² Out of Wessel, *Von einem, der dabei blieb*, 42.

²³ Schedel, *Welchchronik*, fol. 151r: *Mancherlay wunderlicher und erschreckenlicher ding erschinen dieser zeit in kriechischem land, die die künfftigen ubeltat des verfürers Machomets fürkündeten.*

²⁴ Jakob Mennel, *De signis*, fol. 3v (photo: Institut für Realienkunde).



Fig.17: Baby with four feet in the context of the appearance of a comet

And there were monstrous wild men and women (fig. 18)²⁵ living in one's own society. One of them was Petrus Gonsalvus, a hairman. He was born in Tenerife in 1556 and raised at the court of King Henry II of France. Portraits of him and his daughter were painted in c. 1580.

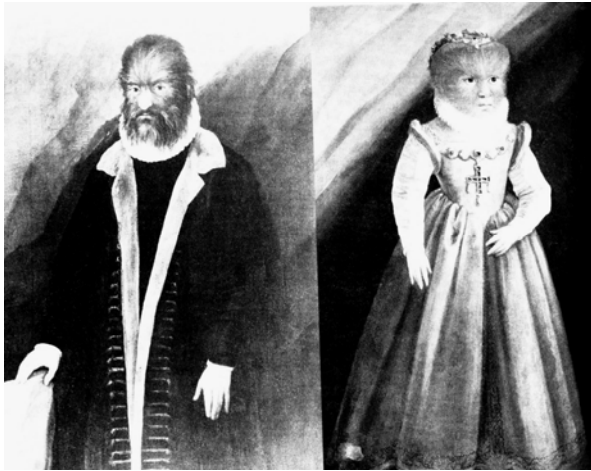


Fig. 18: Petrus Gonsalvus and his daughter

²⁵ Out of Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 194. See also Roberto Zapperi, "Ein Haarmensch auf einem Gemälde von Agostino Carracci," in *Der falsche Körper: Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Monstrositäten*, ed. Michael Hagner (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1995), 45-55.

Sometimes, one finds a closeness between the wondrous monsters of the center and the creatures from the edges of the world in a number of details as, for instance, in the cases of

- the famous monster of Florence, born in 1506, this version out of the *Swiss Chronicle* of Diepold Schilling (fig. 19);²⁶
- the no less famous monster of Cracow, born in the 1540s, out of a 1559 copy of Pierre Boaistuau's "Histoires prodigieuses," produced as a dedication manuscript for Queen Elizabeth I of England (fig. 20);²⁷
- the same Cracow monster in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (fig 21).²⁸



Fig. 19: The Florence monster in Diepold Schilling's chronicle

²⁶ Out of Alfred A. Schmid, ed., *Die Schweizer Bilderchronik des Luzerners Diepold Schilling 1513* (Luzern: Faksimile-Verlag, 1981), fol. 222r.

²⁷ Out of Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 184.

²⁸ Out of Wessel, *Von einem, der daheimblieb*, 37.

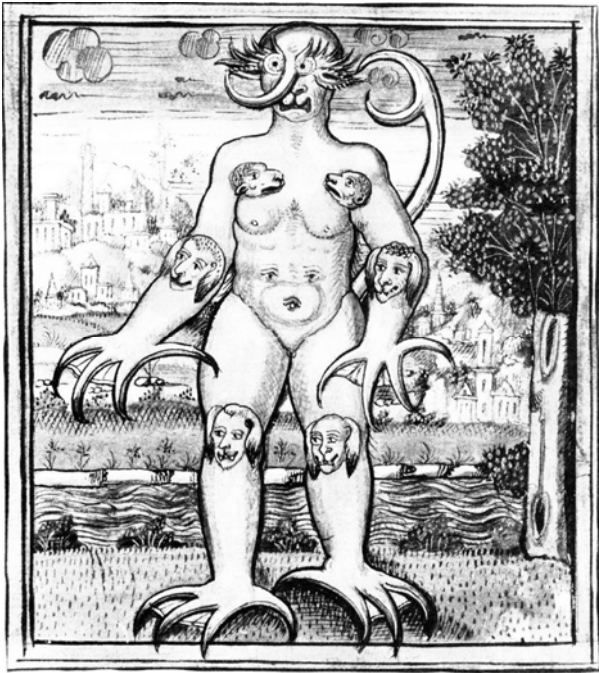


Fig. 20: The Cracow monster of Pierre Boaistuau

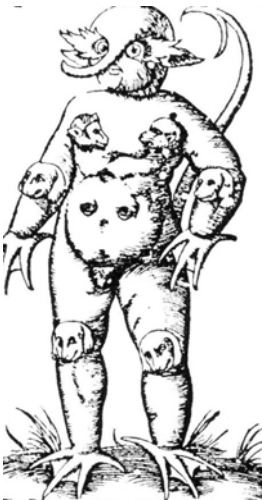


Fig. 21: The Cracow monster in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*

* * *

The edges of the world and the creatures living there were a construction by the society of the center to act as a kind of counter-image to its own world. The late medieval and early modern visual representations especially show their increased popularity and familiarity. They also demonstrate the proximity and relation of the phenomena ascribed to the fringes and the wondrous occurrences in one's own society, that is, the interdependence in their constructions. The "marvels of the East" did not stay there, but were applied in other contexts: copied, modified, transferred, and returned. There was continuous contact between these constructions from far-off peripheries and the centre, between one's own society and the edges of the world. This contact represented a connection of distance and closeness, of strangeness and familiarity, of the others and ourselves. The edges of one's own society corresponded to the edges of the whole world.

THE PICTURE OF THE WORLD IN OLD NORSE SOURCES

Else Mundal

To begin I will give a short survey of the Old Norse picture of the world in different written sources, such as mythological sources, Christian literature and saga literature. Special importance will, however, be attached to some geographical observations and descriptions found in a few texts describing sailing and distances at sea and descriptions of geography found in the Norwegian work *Konungs skuggsjá* (The King's Mirror) from around 1250.¹

The picture of the world in mythological texts may vary.² One typical picture is that Ásgarðr, the home of the gods, is placed in the centre of the world, and in the centre of Ásgarðr is the ashtree Yggdrasill and the well called Urðarbrunnr. The sky overarches the earth, and under the earth is the underworld. In some texts the gods, and their homes, are placed in the sky, and are not at the same level as the humans. In other texts the men live in Miðgarðr, which is situated around Ásgarðr, and the gods and the humans are placed on the same level. On the outskirts of the world, especially in the North and the East, are the places of the giants. In the beginning of mythic time, the earth – the dry land – was lifted up from the sea by the gods. When this act of creation is described in the poem *Völuspá*, st. 4, the word for 'land', is *hjoð* which also means 'tabletop'. This clearly indicates that the earth is seen as flat. Around the earth lays the great sea, and in that sea lives the worm Miðgarðsormr who was so big that he encircled the whole world.

¹ An overview of the discussion of when *Konungs skuggsjá* was written is found in Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), 12 ff.

² The fullest description of the mythic world is found in *Gylfaginning* in Snorri's *Edda* [Anthony Faulkes (ed.), Snorri Sturluson. *Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning* (London: University College, 1988)]. This source is in many ways problematic since it was written more than 200 years after Christianization. On the discussion of the world picture in Old Norse myths, see Jens Peter Schjødt, "Horizontale und vertikale Achsen in der vorchristlichen skandinavischen Kosmologie," in *Old Norse and Finnish Religions and Cultic Place-Names*, ed. Tore Ahlbäck (Åbo: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1990), 35-57; Else Mundal, "Forholdet mellom myteinnehold og myteform," in *Nordiske bedendom. Et symposium*, ed. Gro Steinsland et al. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1991), 229-244.

One point I want to make is that we should be very careful not to draw firm conclusions about the Old Norse picture of the world on the basis of mythological texts. The flat earth where gods, humans and giants move on the same level is more or less the same picture that we still find in fairytales today. That picture is not representative of the picture of the world in our culture, and I think we should take care not to take the picture of the world in Old Norse myths too literally, either.

Christianization brought a new picture of the world to Scandinavia, but in many ways one not very different from the picture in the Old Norse myths. The flat earth, heaven above and hell below has much in common with the Old Norse mythic picture; the major difference is that the underworld in the Christian texts is a place of punishment. Christianization, however, moved the centre of the world. Ásgarðr with Yggdrasill and the Urðarbrunnr in the mythological texts cannot easily be places in the geography of the human world – when Snorri in *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla* places Ásgarðr in the human geography, he combines the mythic picture of the world with the picture he knew from the learned literature of his time. In the minds of the heathen Scandinavians, the home of the gods must, however, have been connected to their own world in the North. In a skaldic stanza from around the year 1000 the skald Eilífr Guðrúnarson describes how Christianity gains ground at the expense of the old religion, and says that the new god, Christ, is the strong king of Rome who sits in the South by the Urðarbrunnr.³ The old centre of the world, the well of Urðr, has here been moved to the centre of the Christian Church. We may say that it was the incorporation of the North into the Christian culture that made the Scandinavians aware that they were living in the periphery of the world, or on the edges of the world. By recognizing Rome, Byzantium and Jerusalem as centres in the Christian world, they came to see their own lands from a new perspective. But from that time on we can say that in the mind of people living in the Old Norse world there were two centres: a southern centre corresponding with a Christian identity, and a northern centre corresponding with a Nordic identity.

In saga literature and other kinds of Old Norse texts – as well as in the Old Norse language itself – the mental centre of the world is placed in the North. If we look at how the words for directions – ‘north’, ‘south’, ‘east’ and ‘west’ – are used, we are able to locate a centre of orientation. On raids in England or Ireland the Vikings were in *vestrvíking*; if they went to the Baltic Sea or Russia, they were in *austrvíking*. Even Icelanders who sailed from Iceland to England sailed west, and they sailed *út*, ‘out’, to their own country. People who travelled to what is Germany today, or Italy, were *á suðrvegum*, ‘in the southern lands’. Norway, *Norðr-vegr*, was probably at first the name of the sailing

³ *Setbergs kveðja síja / sunnr at Urðar brunn / svá hefr ramr konungr remðan / Róms banda sik lönðum* [Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912-15) BI: 144].

fairway along the coast and later the name of the land along the coast. This points towards Denmark/Southern Norway as a centre of orientation in the Old Norse world.⁴

Another point worth mentioning is that there is an enormously wide horizon in Old Norse saga literature. The heroes of this literature travel from Vínland – somewhere on the east coast of North America – in the west to far into Asia in the east. They sailed to Greenland and north of Norway to The White Sea, they raided in the Mediterranean Sea and on the north coast of Africa. Their knowledge of geography based on their own experience was considerable.

In Christian times people in the North adopted the picture of the world found in learned literature with the division into three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa – a map which in fact was outdated in the Old Norse world at the time since they knew that there was land west of the great sea. In the thirteenth century we have proof that the people in Scandinavia – or at least some people – were aware of the fact that the earth was round like a ball. This is the description of the world in the Norwegian work *Konungs skuggsjá*. The author, who is unknown, mentions Isidor and other wise men as authorities.

At the time when *Konungs skuggsjá* was written, it was generally accepted in learned circles that the earth was round like a ball. The picture of the earth in these learned circles was a sort of combination of – or a compromise between – the Biblical view of the earth as flat and the learned picture of the earth as round. The “flat” earth was placed on top of the ball, and was round like a pancake. It seems, however, that the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* is also influenced by slightly different – and more advanced – theories on the shape of the earth. He mentions *kringla heimsins*, which could be understood as the “flat” earth on top of the ball, but he also speaks of *kringlur heimsins* in the plural. In Old Norse the word *kringla* meant something round, but could be used to describe both a flat round object and an object formed like a ring or a circle. When the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* talks about *kringlur heimsins* in the plural, it is obvious that he uses the word *kringla* to mean the latter. The author has adopted the old and generally accepted view of the world as divided into five zones: a hot zone in the middle, temperate zones on both sides of the hot zone, and cold zones on both outer sides – it is in this connection that he mentions Isidor. As expressed in *Konungs skuggsjá*: “the hot belt lies from east towards west as a round ring of burning land around the whole terrestrial ball” (*hinn beiti vægrinn ligr or austri oc i vestr mæð þingum ring brænnanda vægar um kringdum allum iarðar bollum*).⁵ On both sides of the hot belt, there are temperate belts where people can live, and on the “outsides” of the earth, both in the North and the South, the

⁴ On the centre in the Old Norse world see Else Mundal, “Framveksten av den islandske identiteten, dei norske rotene og forholdet til Noreg,” *Collegium Medievale* 1997/1-2 (1998): 7-8.

⁵ *Konungs skuggsjá*, in *Norrøne tekster* 1, ed. Ludvig Holm-Olsen, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Forlagsentralen, 1983), 32 (hereafter: *Konungs skuggsjá*).

earth is frozen. The author of *Konungs skuggsjá* lets the wise father argue that it is not true what most people say, that the earth will be warmer the farther south people go. The extreme South is cold like the extreme North, the father explains to the son who asks questions, and the temperate zone south of the hot zone is exactly like the temperate zone north of the hot zone, and people may live there. The author of *Konungs skuggsjá* was not the only one to argue that there were two temperate zones on the earth where people could live. He may have known William of Conches who followed the old philosophers in describing the southern temperate zone as inhabited because it was logically believable, but stated that he did not believe it because this view was inconsistent with the Christian faith.⁶ The author of *Konungs skuggsjá* seems to be less concerned about a possible conflict with the Christian doctrine. He seems to believe that people lived south of the hot belt as well as north of it. They have summer when we have winter, he states, because the sun then takes a southern route, and vice versa.⁷

It is also worth mentioning that the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* is very open-minded. He is not able to give a full answer, he admits, because he “has not found anyone who has investigated all the zones (circles) of the world, the shape of the earth, or has investigated all the “sides” of the earth, how the lands are divided or the extreme borders of the lands” (...*hafi ángan þann funnit er kannat hafi allar kringlur heimsens eða hans vaxt eða rannzakat hafe allar heimsens síður eða landa skipan eða þau ænndimorc sem þar ero ískipat*).⁸ He *thinks* that Greenland is connected to other continents (*meginlönd*) and is not an island.⁹ He *thinks* that there are no lands on the other side of Greenland¹⁰ – this does not mean that the author is not aware of Vinland. Vinland was situated southwest of Greenland. He has a lot of knowledge, but he admits that there is a world out there to investigate.

According to the picture of the world found in *Konungs skuggsjá*, people live in wide areas, and on both sides of the hot belt. The picture is not fully consistent, and there may be inconsistencies which are difficult to explain, but it seems that the earth is growing and creeping down the “sides” of the terrestrial ball.¹¹

The most surprising thing in the description of the shape of the earth in *Konungs skuggsjá* is perhaps not that the earth is round like a ball, but the fact that this knowledge is presented as a matter of course. And the question is: had the seafaring Vikings, who had seen the earth rising from the sea and sinking into the sea, figured out that the earth

⁶ See Sverre Bagge, “Nature and Society in *The King’s Mirror*,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 109 (1994): 11–12.

⁷ *Konungs skuggsjá*, 35.

⁸ *Konungs skuggsjá*, 31.

⁹ *Konungs skuggsjá*, 30.

¹⁰ *Konungs skuggsjá*, 32.

¹¹ In our mental map north is on the top of the terrestrial ball. In *Konungs skuggsjá* north and south are on the ‘outsides’ of the ball. Since the sun is moving around the earth and passes under the earth during the night, the top of the earth is on the line from east towards west.

was round like a ball? Were the descriptions of the earth as round in learned literature only a confirmation of what they already knew and nothing to make a great fuss about?

The phrase *kringla heimsins* is today more closely connected to another work than *Konungs skuggsjá*, namely to Snorri Sturluson's sagas of kings. He starts his first saga, *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*, with the words: *Kringla heimsins, sú er mannfólket byggvir...* (The circle of the earth which is inhabited by men ...). Snorri wrote his sagas of kings about twenty years before the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* wrote his work. From Snorri's text alone it is impossible to see whether he thinks the earth is flat or round like a ball. However, the use of the phrase *kringla heimsins*, which a few decades later was used by the author of *Konungs skuggsjá* as a "scientific" term for the area where people lived, indicates that Snorri, too, was familiar with the learned picture of the earth in the shape of a round ball.¹² But in contrast to the author of *Konungs skuggsjá*, Snorri speaks only of one *kringla heimsins* where people live. His picture of the world, with the inhabited lands on top of the terrestrial ball, seems to be the more common one.

Snorri and the unknown author of *Konungs skuggsjá* wrote their works in the thirteenth century, but what did people who lived earlier in Old Norse times – in the period before the written culture which made the influence from learned circles in Europe possible – think of the shape of the earth? This is of course a difficult question to answer since we have no written sources from that period. But in later written sources we have some descriptions of sailing and sailing routes which are believed to be built on experiences much older than the written sources in which they are found, probably stemming from experiences the seafaring Vikings had when they first began to sail – or row – the great seas. Here I will draw special attention to one such description of a sailing route from Norway to Greenland found in the Hauksbók version of *Landnámabók* (early fourteenth century):

*Af Hernum af Nóregi skal sigla jafnan í vestr til Hvarfs á Grænlandi, ok er þá sight fyrir norðan Hjaltlandi, svá at því at eins sé þat, at allgóð sé sjóvar sýn, en fyrir sunnan Færeyjar, svá at sjór er í miðjum bláðum ...*¹³

(From Hernar [now Hennøya] in Norway one shall sail straight west to Hvarf in Greenland. One then sails north of Shetland so that it is barely seen when the sight at sea is very good, and south of the Faeroe Islands so that the sea is [seen] in the middle of the mountainsides...).

What did people who established their position at sea by looking at how much of the nearest land was visible over the horizon, think of the shape of the earth? Is there any possible explanation other than that they had figured out on the basis of their own ex-

¹² The author of *Konungs skuggsjá* was in all likelihood closely connected to the circles around the Norwegian court. Snorri visited the Norwegian court twice, and it is not unlikely that the two authors had met.

¹³ *Landnámabók*, in *Íslenskt fornrit* II, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1968), 33.

perience that the earth was round like a ball, or at least, that the surface of the earth was spherical?

The observation that the sea – from a great distance – can be seen in the middle of the mountainsides is also found in other Old Norse texts. In *Egils saga* it is told that Þórólfr sailed south along the coast of Norway far from land – *en stundum svá, at sjór var í midjum hlíðum* (and sometimes so that the sea was [seen] in the middle of the mountain-sides).¹⁴ The reason for sailing so far from land was that they knew that they were not seen from the shore. They were sailing behind the horizon. *Egils saga* is written in the thirteenth century, according to most scholars around 1230. However, the fact that the same wording, *sjór er / var í midjum hlíðum*, is used more than once, indicates that this is an old formula in the Old Norse language giving expression to experiences of a seafaring people.

There are also other scenes or descriptions of episodes in saga literature which clearly show that people in the Old Norse culture could use their awareness of the curvature of the earth's surface to play a trick on an enemy. In *Óláfs saga ins helga* in *Heimskringla* and in *The separate Óláfs saga* Snorri tells how the king caught Erlingr Skjálgsson in a trap by reefing the sails and removing the rails, thus giving the impression that the king's ships sailed faster than Erlingr's ships.¹⁵ The low sails and the ships, which were hardly visible over the sea level after the rails had been removed, were intended to give the impression that the king's ships were about to sail beyond the horizon.¹⁶

If we take into consideration the possibility that the Vikings had figured out that the earth was the shape of a ball, I think that their journeys towards the far west and the far north should be seen in light of this knowledge. The journeys of the people who settled in Iceland, Greenland, and who tried to settle in Vínland – somewhere on the east coast of North America – are in the later written sources often described as *landleitan*, 'searches for land'. These people were looking for, and were in need of, land to cultivate, but they are in fact also described as explorers in the Old Norse texts. The motivation for their journeys into the unknown sea may also have been due to this new knowledge, namely that the earth was round like a ball, which made it reasonable to think that there was land out there, in the sea or on the other side of the sea, which had not yet been discovered. There is nothing in the Old Norse texts to indicate that the

¹⁴ *Egils saga*, in *Íslenzk fornrit* II, ed. Sigurður Nordal (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1933), ch. 19.

¹⁵ *Óláfs saga ins helga* in *Heimskringla*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gad, 1911), ch. 175; *The separate Óláfs saga* (*Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. Oscar Albert Jonsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo: Dybwad, 1941), ch. 169.

¹⁶ Thanks to Eldar Heide who made me aware that this description of the king's sailing probably demonstrates the same thing as the other sailing descriptions mentioned here, namely that people living in the Old Norse culture had noticed the curvature of the earth's surface. See also Eldar Heide and Jon Godal, "Gammalnorsk handrif på skip – 'hand-rev' eller 'rekkverk'?" in *Norsk sjofartsmuseum Årbok* 2000: 129–146.

Vikings' real picture of the world gave them reason to be afraid that if they sailed far enough out in the ocean they would sail over the edge.

“THE LAND OF THE NORWEGIANS IS THE LAST IN THE WORLD”:
A MID-ELEVENTH-CENTURY DESCRIPTION
OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES FROM THE PEN OF ADAM OF BREMEN¹

Torstein Jørgensen

INTRODUCTION

In his discussion of the lands of the North, Adam of Bremen’s first reference to Norway stresses that “...Nortmannia is the farthest country of the world”. The country stretches, he says, “...with its main ridge bent toward the uttermost North...” and it “...has its bounds in the Rhiphaean Mountains where the tired world also comes to an end.”² “Beyond Norway...”, he continues, “...you will find no human habitation, nothing but ocean, terrible to look upon and limitless, encircling the whole world.”³

It is in the fourth chapter of his book about the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen⁴ that Adam makes a change in his scope. Whereas the first three chapters are composed as a historical account, the fourth and last chapter⁵ renders an outward view of the wide and vast lands of his archdiocese with its fringing borders towards a reality vanishing into the unknown.

The liminality that Adam ascribes to Norway is, however, not only a geographical one. It pertains also to the quality of the land. The country is, according to him, “the

¹ English quotations are in this article taken from *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen: Adam of Bremen*, transl. F. J. Tschann, new introduction by T. Reuter (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) (hereafter *AB*). Latin quotations in footnotes are taken from *Adam af Bremen: Beskrivelse af øerne i Norden*, transl. A. A. Lund (Højberg: Wormianum, 1978). For Nordic readers we refer also to *Adam av Bremen: Beretningen om Hamburg stift, erkebiskopens bedrifter og øyrikene i Norden* transl. and ed. B. T. Danielsen and A. K. Frihagen (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1993).

² *AB* IV, xxxi, p. 210 f.: *Nortmannia sicut ultima orbis provintia est quod longitudine sua in extremam septentrionis plagam extenditur tandem in Ripheis montibus limitem facit ubi et lassus deficit orbis.*

³ *AB* IV, xxxv, p. 215: *Post Nortmanniam ... nihil invenies habitacionis humane nisi terribilem visu et infinitum oceanum, qui totum mundum amplectitur.*

⁴ *Historia Hammarburgensis ecclesiae.*

⁵ *Descriptio insularum Aquilonis.*

most unproductive of all countries, suited only for herds,”⁶ which perhaps is an indication of Adam’s astonishment that this land was not completely and totally barren. And as we shall see later, when Adam turns his eyes to Norway he finds himself looking into a land in which the orderly world meets its cosmic foundations, in which the known world faces the unknown and in which reality passes over into fantasy and fiction. Given that Adam was a learned theologian, his description is of particular importance as it contains eschatological perspectives indicating that the view towards this particular edge of the earth also opens a window from the present world into the next.

GENERAL POINTS REGARDING ADAM OF BREMEN AND HIS WORK

Before going into the details of Adam’s perspectives on Norway, some general notes concerning his life and his work are necessary. About himself personally, Adam reveals little. Among the few particulars he does mention is that he arrived as a stranger to Bremen in the 24th year of Adalbert’s archiepiscopate,⁷ which means that his career there started sometime in the year 1066 or 1067. He also refers to himself in his epilogue as a *magister*. And when addressing archbishop Liemar, to whom his work was dedicated, and appealing for him to look with benevolence on his “juvenile efforts,”⁸ this is perhaps not only a phrase of courtesy, but may also be a true pointer to a person of a younger age.

An exact dating of Adam’s work is uncertain, but one can speculate with a reasonable degree of certainty that his text was completed sometime between 1075 and 1076. His reference to the Danish king, Sven Estridsson, in Chapter Two of Adam’s book first refers to him as the one “who now rules in Denmark,”⁹ but later in the same chapter Sven is referred to as a deceased “long-to-be-remembered king.”¹⁰ The report of the King’s death in 1074 must have been known to Adam while writing his second chapter. A further indication of the certainty of the dating of his text is found at the very end of the book where the author makes mention of archbishop Liemar’s role as a mediator, which is a likely reference to his bishop’s role in the conflict between Henry IV and the Saxons in 1075. Since Archbishop Adalbert is referred to as dead throughout the book, and since the year of his death was 1072, Adam probably started his writing after this year.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the details about the preserved manuscripts of Adam’s work and the interrelation between them. Approximately twenty medieval manuscripts of his book exist today, the oldest dating from around 1100. The

⁶ AB IV, xxxi, p. 211: *Nortmannia sterilissima est omnium regionum, solis apta pecoribus.*

⁷ AB III, iv, p. 118.

⁸ AB Epilogue, p. 225.

⁹ AB II, xxxiii, p. 73

¹⁰ AB II, xliii, p. 84.

collection of manuscripts represents a great variety of texts. Most contain scholions and additional notes, some only present a clean text, and very few are complete. Bernard Schmeidler's edition from 1917¹¹ is still the standard version for reference, complete with an informative introduction, which includes a detailed analysis of the tradition of manuscripts.

ADAM'S BASIC AIMS AND APPROACHES

Adam's main goal was no doubt to write the history of his archdiocese as thoroughly as possible. In this endeavour, he notes, he could hardly find traces of anyone who had walked this way before him. And he describes his task as "groping in darkness on an unknown road."¹² However, on this unknown road he explicitly stresses his intention of making his account as reliable as possible by "...making no statement without due consideration..." and to have everything he puts down "...substantiated by sound authorities..."¹³ Of course, Adam's history can by no means be measured by modern scholarly standards. But it is of interest to note his words about "the meadows" from which "...I have gathered this garland..." which he specifies as "scattered records", "histories and charters" and "...what I learned from the tradition of older men who knew the facts."¹⁴ And when describing Iceland and Ultimate Thule he states: "Disregarding the fabulous, these facts about Iceland and the farthest Thule we learned are true."¹⁵ So, according to Adam's own subjective view, the details of his account do reflect reality and truth, and do not include fantasy and fiction. Nevertheless, having said that, one has, of course, to keep in mind that in Adam's pre-modern *universalis ante rem*-approach to reality the spiritual world had a higher degree of real existence than the material one.

Among the written sources mostly used by Adam, we find the *Vita Ansgarii*, written by Rimbert, one of his predecessors as canon in Bremen some two centuries earlier. About this source Adam notes that he finds Rimbert's account in some places so detailed and lengthy that he has shortened his text. He also states that he has adjusted some of Rimbert's chronology on the basis of "other writings"¹⁶ available to him at that time. Another of his main sources was Einhard's *Vita Caroli Magni* from the 830's. Furthermore, he consulted older chronicles and annals such as Gregor of Tours' *Historia Francorum* and annals from the Corvey and Fulda monasteries. He has obviously also had access to archival material from several bishoprics, not least those of his own

¹¹ B. Schmeidler, *Hamburg-Bremen und Nordost-Europa vom 9. bis 11. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1918).

¹² AB Prologue, p. 4.

¹³ AB Prologue, p. 5.

¹⁴ AB Prologue p. 4 f.

¹⁵ AB IV, xxxvi, p. 218: *Haec de Island et ultima Thule veraciter comperi, fabulosa preteriens.*

¹⁶ AB I, xvii, p. 24.

province, such as the *Liber donationum Bremensis ecclesiae*. In addition the learned man was well acquainted with classical authors and poets, as well as some of the main church historians of the Old Church. His description of Archbishop Adalbert in the beginning of his third chapter can, for example, be identified as a paraphrase over Sallust’s *Catilina*. On several occasions he makes explicit references to his sources such as Einhard, Solinus, Martianus Capella, Orosius and Bede.¹⁷

When referring to oral sources, Adam mostly does so in general terms without any specific identification. In chapters One and Two he relies on the oral tradition at his own see, and for Chapter Three it is clear that Archbishop Adalbert himself provided Adam with some information. A special figure among Adam’s oral informants was, however, the aforementioned Danish king, Sven Estridsson. Adam notes that before his arrival in Bremen he had heard rumours of the wisdom and learning of this king, giving impetus to pay the king a visit.¹⁸ This trip most likely took place in 1067 or 1068, and brought Adam as far as he ever seems to have gone towards the uttermost North. Whether he ever set out on other journeys into these lands, his writings are silent in this respect. King Sven seems to have been a particularly important source for Adam especially for his description of the Danes, Swedes and Norwegians, as indicated by phrases such as “About these kingdoms the very well-informed king of the Danes told me...”¹⁹

ELEMENTS OF ADAM’S INTERPRETATIVE DESCRIPTION

Behind every comprehensive story, like that derived from Adam’s pen, there will always, however, be a wider and overarching world-view. What were the main elements of Adam’s basic view? And to what extent does this find expression in the words of his text? Here we shall point out some of Adam’s perspectives of this periphery – or to remain within the main title of this book – some edge-of-the-world-perspectives as formulated by Adam.

One of these basic perspectives is, of course, the already mentioned aim of Adam to write his account as realistic and trustworthy as possible. His intention, thus, is to describe the world of the northern lands with their uttermost borders in accordance with how they were. And as a whole his work lays claim to consistency with reality and truth. But, his possibilities to verify or disprove the pieces of information he transmits from his sources were naturally highly limited. And the further apart from his own location in time and in geography, the less were his chances to test whether the description he presented was true or not.

¹⁷ For a more detailed account of Adam’s sources, see F. J. Tschan’s introduction, *AB*, p. xxiii–xlvi.

¹⁸ *AB* III, liv, pp. 160.

¹⁹ *AB* IV, xxi, p. 202: *De quibus narravit mihi scientissimus rex Danorum.*

In the forty-four paragraphs by which Adam builds up his fourth chapter about the lands and islands of the North, he begins with the reality and geography of the Danish mainland, which was closest to him at Bremen. He follows this description by going on to describe the farthestmost borderlands. The Danish mainlands of Jutland and Skåne, as well as the islands and surrounding seas, were quite well known to Adam on the grounds of their proximity to his own habitat. And as a result of his visit to the Danish king he had himself personally travelled through some of these areas and seen with his own eyes what he describes. Adam's description of the Danish lands,²⁰ thus, carries few marks of a liminal perspective. The overall picture both of geography and society is rather detailed and accurate. Only in certain instances does he place some distance between the Danes and himself due to differences that he has observed among them, especially concerning their ideas and practice of justice which as he notes: "...the Danes run contrary to what is fair and good."²¹ For instance, he makes mention of the fact that the Danes know of no other punishment than axe and bondage, and that culprits prefer the axe.²²

A FURTHER STEP OUTWARDS – SWEDEN, NORWAY AND THULE

When describing the Norwegians and the Swedes Adam finds himself still mainly within the known world. He describes the different tribes in these lands: the East- and West Goths, the Sveas, the Värmlanders, the Finns, the Norwegians and the Skridfinns. Names of kings and missionaries in these areas are mentioned, and the places he refers to are mainly identifiable and correct. The peripheral elements are, however, a bit more visible here than in his description of the Danes. But also here these points pertain to differences of conduct and habits. About the Swedes, he writes that they "... are lacking in none of the riches, except the pride that we love or rather adore. For they regard as nothing every means of vainglory; that is gold, silver, stately chargers, beaver and marten pelts, which make us lose our minds admiring them."²³ This lack of greed for material things among the Swedes is according to Adam a custom shared with the Prussians.²⁴ And in his description of the two peoples he uses very similar words, perhaps an indication of a stereotype typical of his time. However, in his discussion of the Swedes, he adds that their lack of greed was not total. When it comes to women he states that

²⁰ AB IV, i-ix, p. 186-93.

²¹ AB IV, vi, p. 190: *Et multa quidem alia tam in legibus quam in moribus aequo bonoque contraria Dani habent.*

²² AB IV, vi, p. 191.

²³ AB IV, xxi, p. 203: *Omnia enim instrumenta vanae gloriae, hoc est aurum, argentum, sonipedes regios, pelles castorum vel marturum, quae nos amiiratione sui dementes faciunt, illi pro nihilo ducunt.*

²⁴ AB IV, xviii, p. 199.

they are without moderation, having “...two or three or more wives at one time.”²⁵ But he admits that also on this point the Swedes are not alone, the same goes for the Slavs, and with reference to Lucan and Sallust, he says that the Parthians and Moors share the same habit.

As for the Norwegians, their differences with other groups described by Adam are attributed primarily to their natural poverty, which consists of a living based exclusively on cattle breeding, simple food from milk and clothes from wool. But, as he notes, their sparse subsistence has nevertheless fostered brave warriors, and by plundering others they bring the greatest of riches back home.²⁶

The people of the remote island of Thule – or Iceland – are, according to Adam’s account, not very different from the Norwegians. They also subsist merely on cattle breeding, but their dwellings are even more primitive than those of the Norwegians, describing them as being holes in the ground which they share with their life stock. By noting that they have their pleasure in their wells, and that their country in great parts is covered with old, dark and dried ice, Adam demonstrates that he has a wealth of knowledge about the island.²⁷

THE LANDS AND PEOPLES OF THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES:
BETWEEN REALITY AND FANTASY

When describing the lands of the Norwegians and the Swedes, Adam also moves into the outskirts of their territories, and by doing so he approaches the real peripheral lands of the Christian world – and of the earth. The tribes living in these parts are also, as Adam depicts them, more liminal in their living, their ways of behaviour, skills and even physical apparition. In the Riphæan Mountains at the northernmost shores of Norway he finds the Skritefingi.²⁸ Their women are said to have beards, and the men conceal themselves in the forest. These people are especially known for their skills in magic. Just by mumbling their secret words they are able to draw great sea monsters to shore, and they “... do much else of which one reads in the Scripture about magicians”;²⁹ and “... in speaking to one another [they] are said to gnash their teeth rather than to utter words.”³⁰

²⁵ AB IV, xxi, p. 203: ... *modum nesciunt; quisque secundum facultatem suarum virium duas aut tres et amplius simul habet.*

²⁶ AB IV, xxxi, p. 211.

²⁷ AB IV, xxxvi, p. 217.

²⁸ Skridfinns.

²⁹ Ex 7:11, 2 Kings 9:22, Dan 2:2, Acts 8:9, 11, 13:6. The reputation of the Saami people of being clever magicians and healers is also stated in texts from early medieval Norwegian provincial laws. See Older Eidsivating Law, I 24, 45, *Norges Gamle Love*, I, Christiania 1846, p. 383, 389.

³⁰ AB IV, xxxii, p. 212, with ref. to Mt. 8:12: ...*et alia multa, quae de maleficiis in Scriptura leguntur, omnia illis ex usu facilia sunt. ... et loquentes ad invicem frendere magis quam verba proferre dicuntur.*

A basic criterion which Adam used to distinguish between peoples similar to himself and those who lived in regions such as the Riphean Mountains seems to have been his understanding of their faith and cult, or to be more precise, whether they were Christian or not. The reason why he could not include the Skridfinns among the former was not only their remote location, but the fact that they were pagans. Their use of sorcery especially was, in his eyes, a sign of their paganism and distance. He makes the same use of this criterion in his discussion of the Norwegians but in a converse manner. As he noted: "And whereas they had from the beginning all been given to the nefarious arts of magic, they now in simplicity confess with the Apostle; Christ and him crucified."³¹

BEYOND THE BORDERS

While moving further away from his habitat, Adam's account bears increasing marks of shrinking knowledge, a disadvantage to which he readily admits. The full length of the Baltic Sea is, for example, unknown to him, and his sources contradict one another as to whether anyone might possess any exact knowledge about it.³² So, besides the Great Sea, the Baltic Sea is an ocean whose far end, in Adam's eyes, seems to disappear into the cosmic twilight of the edges of the world. In the far borders of these waters Adam reports about a people who are bluish-green,³³ and another with dogheads and with this head coming out from their chest and who apparently bark when they speak.³⁴ The latter, he adds, are often taken prisoners by the Russians and can be seen there. He also tells of other peoples in these parts, such as the wizzers, who are born with grey hair, and others who are pale and live extraordinarily long lives.³⁵ Another group of unreal or fantasy peoples that he mentions are the anthropofags who apparently practised cannibalism.³⁶ But perhaps the most conspicuous are the amazones or the people of *terra feminarum* – the land of women. The Latin phrase here is possibly a direct translation of the Nordic word *kvinneland* which has the exact same meaning. This may perhaps also be a distorted understanding on Adam's part of the word Kvenland, which referred to the land of the Kvens, a sub-group of the Saami people. Adam notes that some people say these women get pregnant by drinking the water in the area, but the learned theologian finds the statements given by others that they are being impregnated by male traders or by male prisoners a more likely explanation. It is, however, obvious that Adam

³¹ AB IV, xxxi, p. 211, I Kor 2:2: *Cumque nefandis artibus maleficiorum omnes ab initio servirent, nunc vero cum apostolo simpliciter confitentur Christum et hunc crucifixum.*

³² AB IV, xi, p. 194.

³³ AB IV, xviii, p. 199.

³⁴ AB IV, xix, p. 200.

³⁵ AB IV, xix, p. 201.

³⁶ AB IV, xix, p. 201.

must have thought these statements dubious as he notes: “...our people think it hardly credible,” but, he adds that “...mariners say they have often seen [them].”³⁷

When moving on into the Great Sea Adam finds himself facing the real edges of the world. This ocean surrounds the entire world and is endless in size. He describes an encounter by sailors from Friesland, based on one of their alleged excursions into the very ends of this vast ocean, who claim to have encountered cosmic wells, a bottomless abyss that causes the flood- and ebb tides of all seas.³⁸ When all the currents of the seas are swallowed into the abyss the waters sink, and when it is spat out again, it raises. The surface of the sea in these places is always frozen, and in these outskirts little can be seen because of the dark and everlasting fog. On the way back, the crew of the one ship that escaped being swallowed by the tides landed on the unknown island of the Cyclops. According to Adam these creatures lived in caves, and heaps of gold and precious metals were stored outside the entrances of their dwellings.³⁹

ADAM’S ATTEMPT AT CREATING MEANING TO THE LIMINAL REALITY

Perhaps more important than his descriptions of the physical conditions of the earth’s borderlands and its peoples is, however, the way Adam tries to construct a more overarching meaning to what he writes about these things. Confronted with the unfathomable and the inability to investigate the true reality alongside the borders of everything he has no other choice than resorting to what his learning and biblical knowledge could provide. In several places throughout his account he gives a biblical flavour to his story by quoting phrases from Scripture. But it is at the very end of his book that these perspectives come fully to the surface.

The old biblical tenet combining geography and eschatology by predicting that the Parousia of Christ will take place when the Gospel has been preached to the ends of the world was obviously part of Adam’s basic world view. Already in his dealings with miracles reported from Sweden about one pagan priest from Uppsala being converted to Christianity, Adam reads this as an eschatological event by quoting John 4:35: “Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.”⁴⁰ And when seeing that most of the peoples of the Norwegian lands, except the very marginal Skridfinns and perhaps a few others, at the very edges of the world now give their praise to Christ, the end of this age is impending and the Parousia immi-

³⁷ AB IV, xix, p. 201: *quamvis hoc nostris vis credibile putetur, recitantur a navigantibus sepe inspecta.*

³⁸ AB IV, xl, p. 220 f.

³⁹ AB IV, xli, p. 221.

⁴⁰ AB IV, xxix, p. 209: *Recipite et levate oculos vestros, quoniam regiones iam albae sunt ad messem.*

nent. "There only is its preaching hushed where the world has its end", he says. And with this, "mission, bringing salvation to the heathen" will see its fulfilment.⁴¹

In the vision Adam presents of the eschatological world the "exceedingly fierce race of the Danes, of the Norwegians, or of the Swedes" have their place. Those who "knew nothing else but in barbarism to gnash [their] teeth, have since long learned to intone Alleluia in the praise of God."⁴² It seems in Adam's mind that this bright view of the new status of the lands of the far North is so-to-speak a pre-stage to heaven. And by finishing his book by quoting one verse after the other from passages of the Bible dealing with the Parousia, he leaves no doubt about his basic interpretative perspectives:⁴³ "...so swiftly", he writes, "runs the word of the Almighty that"⁴⁴ and then by quoting the Bible, "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised from the North and from the Sea."⁴⁵ And in compliance with what he now sees among the Northern peoples, he cites St. Paul's words about the coming world that "... every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."⁴⁶

Adam's biblical orientation is also to be seen in his ideas of the physical state of the cosmic foundations of the world. His view of the earth as a land resting on pillars and surrounded by the waters that God has ordered into their place is a direct reflection of passages from the Bible such as Psalms 33:6-7 and 89:12. And in the most clear words, when finding himself confronted with mysteries that "...even the natural philosophers who search out the secrets of things fall into doubt about...,"⁴⁷ Adam admits the limits to human understanding and knowledge. When it comes to this type of intellectual liminality he acts in the capacity of what he primarily was: a learned theologian. To the human mind, he adds, God's "judgements are a great deep," and the remote mysteries beyond the borders of space and time "...are rightly called incomprehensible."⁴⁸

⁴¹ AB IV, xliii, p. 222: ... ibi solummodo ponens euangelizandi silentium, ubi mundus terminum habet...quae salutifera gentium.

⁴² AB IV, xlii, p. 222 f: illa ferocissima Danorum sive Nortmannorum aut Sueonum natio...nihil aliud scivit nisi barbarum frendere, iam dudum novit in Dei laudibus alleluia resonare.

⁴³ Hebr 13:14, Psalm 27:13, 77:11.

⁴⁴ AB IV, xlii, p. 223: tam velociter currit sermo omnipotentis Deo.

⁴⁵ Psalm 113:3: ... ut, a solis ortu et occasu, ab aquilone et mari laudabile sit nomen Domini.

⁴⁶ Phil 2:11: ... et omnis lingua confiteatur, quia dominus Iesus Christus in gloria est Dei patris.

⁴⁷ AB IV, xlii, p. 222: ... ipsi, qui archana rerum phisici perscrutantur, in dubitationem cadant eius rei, cuius ignorant originem.

⁴⁸ AB IV, xlii, p. 222: ... iudicia tua abyssus multa ideoque iure dicuntur incomprehensibilia.

POLITICAL RHETORIC AND THE EDGES OF CHRISTIANITY:
LIVONIA AND ITS EVIL ENEMIES IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY¹

Anti Selart

Medieval Livonia was born through battles and confrontations. Crusaders, military orders, and vassals migrating from Germany had conquered the pagans in the territory of Estonia and Latvia by approximately the year 1300, yet this did not mean peace for Livonia. Lithuanians and Samogitians remained pagan up until the turn of the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth. The political authority of Lithuania also expanded to the neighbouring areas of Orthodox Russia: Polotsk, and occasionally Pskov, Russians became subjects of the pagan grand dukes of Lithuania. Sporadic border conflicts broke out with Novgorod Russians. But as much as the conflicts on the external borders, internal conflicts also moulded the history of medieval Livonia.² The strongest political power in Livonia was the Teutonic Order, which, from the second half of the thirteenth century, competed with the archbishop of Riga and other bishoprics of Livonia for hegemony and political authority. This confrontation, sometimes latent but occasionally bursting into war, demanded, besides other issues, that the parties had to render sense to their role and meaning in Livonia – in the country located at the edge of Catholic Christendom, in the immediate vicinity of pagans and schismatics. The parties in Livonia constantly brought actions against each other before the emperor and, in most cases, the papal curia. In litigation, they needed arguments that would justify their activities and cast a shadow on their opponents. The most important issue in this argumentation concerned Livonia's neighbours: Were they dangerous infidels or future Christians, ready to be baptised? Were they unfaithful schismatics or Russians willing to acknowledge the primacy of the pope? The circle of potential allies on the northeastern edge of Europe was limited and in reality all the powers in Livonia had to conclude

¹ Under support of the Eesti Teadusfond (grant no. 7129).

² See the general works in English: William Urban, *Livonian Crusade*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 2004); Alan V. Murray, ed., *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) (hereafter: Murray, *Crusade and Conversion*); William Urban, *Tannenberg and After. Lithuania, Poland, and the Teutonic Order in Search of Immortality* (Chicago: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 2002).

alliances with non-Catholics which, in turn, then had to be justified to the Catholic public. Erich Maschke described the late medieval situation as follows: “Nur in den gegenseitigen Vorwürfen lebte die Idee der Mission fort.”³ In addition, the actual substance of the concept, “entire Christendom,” in the interests of whom the parties claimed to be operating, frequently meant “me and my allies.”⁴ The position of Livonia in Baltic politics was in turn closely connected with Prussia, where pagan Lithuanians and schismatic Russians also played important roles in the polemics of the Teutonic Order against Poland.⁵

During the thirteenth century and even the fourteenth century, dangerous enemies for Livonia were, firstly, the pagans, and secondly, the schismatics, who initially had played their role rather as subjects of and assistants to the Lithuanians, not independently.⁶ The situation changed dramatically at the end of the fourteenth century, when Lithuania adopted Christianity. Pursuant to the agreement concluded in Krewo in 1385, Grand Duke Jogaila of Lithuania was baptized as a Catholic. He married the Polish Queen Jadwiga in 1386 and acceded to the Polish throne as King Władysław. The next year, Lithuania underwent massive baptism. Yet the complete formal Catholicisation of pagan Lithuania did indeed last for a relatively long time, Samogitia was only converted between the years 1413-1417.⁷ In the beginning, the Teutonic Order refused to recognise Jogaila as a Christian, referring to the threat that the king might become an apostate. The Order developed propaganda that Jogaila’s marriage was null and void as Jadwiga had been engaged to the Austrian Duke William of Hapsburg. In such a complicated political situation, the Order formed an alliance with the Catholic neophyte Vytautas and the pagan Samogitians against the Catholic convert King Jogaila in 1389-1392.⁸ As a matter of fact, sooner or later, Christianisation of Lithuania inevitably necessitated the need for a new self-legitimisation by the Teutonic Order.⁹ Finally, the

³ Erich Maschke, *Der Deutsche Orden und die Preußen. Bekehrung und Unterwerfung in der preußisch-baltischen Mission des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Ebering, 1928), 63.

⁴ See Jan Kostrzak, “Frühe Formen des altlivländischen Landtages,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 32 (1984): 163-198, here 168-169.

⁵ See the short English introduction: James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels. The Church and the Non-Christian World 1250-1550* (Liverpool: University Press, 1979), 97-100, 107-119.

⁶ Anti Selart, “Confessional Conflict and Political Co-operation: Livonia and Russia in the Thirteenth Century,” in Murray, *Crusade and Conversion*, 151-176; Anti Selart, *Livland und die Rus’ im 13. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007) (hereafter: Selart, *Livland und die Rus’*).

⁷ Zigmantas Kiaupa, Jūratė Kiaupienė and Albinas Kuncavičius, *The History of Lithuania before 1795* (Vilnius: Artila 2000), 145-147 (hereafter Kiaupa et al., *History*); Darius Baronas et al., *Christianity in Lithuania* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2002), 45-49.

⁸ William Urban, “The Teutonic Order and the Christianization of Lithuania,” in *La cristianizzazione della Lituania*, ed. Paulius Rabikauskas (Città del Vaticano: Libr. Ed. Vaticana, 1989), 105-135, here 130-135.

⁹ Hartmut Boockmann, *Der Deutsche Orden. Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1989), 172-180; Maike Sach, *Hochmeister und Grossfürst. Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Deutschen Orden in Preussen und dem Moskauer Staat um die Wende zur Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 38-42 (hereafter: Sach, *Hochmeister*); Sven

proximity of schismatic Russians became one of the main new sources of legitimisation for the Teutonic Order in Livonia.¹⁰ Roughly speaking, the same development can also be seen in rhetoric of legitimacy of other Livonian states – the archbishopric of Riga, and the bishoprics of Tartu and Saaremaa (Ösel).

* * *

Taking a closer look at the letters mentioning the adversarial neighbours of Livonia – pagans, infidels, (schismatic) Russians – it is also necessary to consider the concrete situation of the time when they were written and their task at that time. A dangerous environment is thus not an empirical truth, but an argument: an argument when applying for, protecting or repelling something. Livonia as a whole consisted of several different states; however, they shared the common rhetoric regarding the frontier of the Christian world. Likewise, the Bishop of Saaremaa, whose diocese had no direct boundaries with pagan Lithuania or Orthodox Russia, could present himself as located “among neophytes and schismatics.”¹¹

The justification and reasoning behind the claim regarding the dangerous vicinity is most explicitly revealed in the description of certain political steps. In 1392, the Livonian master of the Teutonic Order justified the occupation of the archbishopric of Riga by the troops of the Order to the pope by stating that in this way the Order saved the country and prevented it from falling to the “pagans, infidel Russians and other enemies of Livonia”; the archbishop in Riga and the canons had been in an alliance with the pagans, Russians, other infidels and enemies of the Order, including the kings of Denmark and Poland. Provided the Teutonic Order had not carried out such activities, Livonia would have fallen into the hands of pagans, Russians, other infidels or pirates.¹²

Ekdahl, “Christianisierung – Siedlung – Litauerreise. Die Christianisierung Litauens als Dilemma des Deutschen Ordens,” in *Lietuvos krikščionijimas Vidurio Europos kontekste. Die Christianisierung Litauens im mitteleuropäischen Kontext*, ed. Vydas Dolinskas (Vilnius: Lietuvos dailės muziejus, 2005), 189-205; Klaus Militzer, “Der Wandel in der Begründung des Existenz des Deutschen Ordens und seiner Selbstrechtfertigung vor und nach der Schlacht bei Tannenberg,” in *Kancelaria wielkich mistrzów i polska kancelaria królewska w XV wieku*, ed. Janusz Trupinda (Malbork: Muzeum Zamkowe, 2006), 179-190. See also generally Odilo Engels, “Zur Historiographie des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 48 (1966): 336-363, here 356-360; Hartmut Boockmann, *Johannes Falkenberg, der Deutsche Orden und die polnische Politik. Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie des späteren Mittelalters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975).

¹⁰ Sach, *Hochmeister*, 95-118.

¹¹ E. g., Arthur Motzki, “Livonica aus den Supplikenregistern von Avignon (1342 Okt. 11 - 1366 Mai 9),” *Mitteilungen aus der livländischen Geschichte* 21 (1911-1928): 101-172, here 155, no. 119.

¹² Friedrich Georg von Bunge and others, eds., *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten*, vol. 1-12 (Reval: Kluge und Ström, 1853-1910), here vol. 3, no. 1333 (hereafter: *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*); Kurt Forstreuter et al., eds., *Die Berichte der Generalprokuratoren des Deutschen Ordens an der Kurie*, vol. 1-4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961-1976), here vol. 1, no. 210 (hereafter: *Berichte*).

Similar argumentation was repeatedly used by the Teutonic Order during these years.¹³ At the end of the fourteenth century, a particularly sharp conflict developed in Livonia between the Order and its opponents; the anti-Order wing was headed by Bishop Dietrich Damerow of Tartu, who also incorporated Victual Brothers, a strong company of pirates operating on the Baltic Sea, as his allies. This explains the addition of pirates to the list of Livonia's enemies.

The Teutonic Order accused the bishop of Tartu of being allied with Russians¹⁴ and "infidel Lithuanians" (1395, 1396).¹⁵ In 1396, the grand master of the Teutonic Order informed King Wenceslaus that the bishop of Tartu had allied with the Lithuanians and Russians and if the Russians or Lithuanians seized the Tartu bishopric's castles, situated on the border with Russia, it would be a great danger for all of Livonia and the whole of Christendom.¹⁶ This noteworthy and recurrently used formulation¹⁷ lists pagans and schismatics first and only then the "other enemies" (without defining them more precisely) or the allies of the infidels, therefore, the text was primarily targeted against the Christian and Catholic opponents of the Order, who were thus positioned rhetorically on the same level as non-Christians.¹⁸ Immediately after the conclusion of the Krewo treaty, the Order complained that Poland was hindering the crusade of the Teutonic Order against the "Lithuanians, Russians and other infidels."¹⁹ In 1396, the grand master of the Teutonic Order wrote to the proctor of the Order in Rome²⁰ that the Poles were lying when they stated that the Lithuanians and their Grand Duke Vytautas were actually proper Christians.²¹ At the beginning of the fifteenth century, an additional argument that the Polish king was connected to schismatics and pagans was used repeatedly.²² Even during the period 1416-1417, the diplomats of the Order expressed their scepticism with regard to the Christianisation of Samogitia and Vytautas.²³

¹³ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 3, nos. 1334, 1344; vol. 4, no. 1412.

¹⁴ Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 1, nos. 240, 241.

¹⁵ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 4, nos. 1383, 1399, 1400, 1421, 1425.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. 4, no. 1404.

¹⁷ E. g., Oskar Stavenhagen et al., ed., *Akten und Recesse der livländischen Ständetage*, vol. 1-3 (Riga: Deubner, 1907-1938), here vol. 1, no. 12a, p. 758 (hereafter: Stavenhagen, *Acten*); *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 2, no. 654.

¹⁸ Werner Paravicini, *Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels*, vol. 1, (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989), 38 (hereafter: Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*).

¹⁹ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 3, no. 1238.

²⁰ See Jan-Erik Beuttel, *Der Generalprokurator des Deutschen Ordens an der römischen Kurie. Amt, Funktionen, personales Umfeld und Finanzierung* (Marburg: Elwert, 1999), 206-227.

²¹ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 4, no. 1421.

²² Johannes Voigt, ed. *Codex Diplomaticus Prussicus. Urkunden-Sammlung zur älteren Geschichte Preussens*, vols 1-6 (Königsberg: Bornträger, 1836-1861), here vol. 5, nos. 135, 137; vol. 6 nos. 140, 146, pp. 155-159 (hereafter: *Codex Diplomaticus*); Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 2, no. 102 cf. vol. 2, no. 31, p. 90. See also *ibidem*, vol. 4/1, nos. 292, 346.

²³ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 5, nos. 2063, 2127. Cf. Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 2, no. 151.

Similar rhetoric was also intrinsic to the opponents of the Order. The supporters of the archbishop came out with accusations that without the Teutonic Order's violence Lithuanians and Russians would have become Catholics much earlier – according to the Order, such an accusation was another Polish lie.²⁴ However, such argumentation was in general quite flexible. In 1417, the Order launched a protest against the fact that Grand Duke Vytautas was appointed the protector of the Tartu bishopric against “Russians and infidels” – that is, in reality, primarily against the Teutonic Order's attempts to assume hegemony.²⁵ The next year, Vytautas wrote to the grand master, stating that in as much as he had not concluded an alliance with Moscow against the Teutonic Order, the Order should not ally with Pskov against Lithuania as it was not appropriate for one Christian nation to ally with infidels against another Christian nation; it should be an obligation of the Order to spread Christianity just like the grand duke of Lithuania.²⁶ Likewise, Vytautas threatened to lodge a claim regarding the truce between the Teutonic Order and Pskov before the pope, emperor, princes, dukes and the Council of Constance.²⁷ The Order justified the truce as an indispensable need because the pagans had caused a great deal of damage to Livonia.²⁸ In reality, the number of schismatics the grand duke referred to as infidels in case of Pskov was remarkably larger than that of Catholics among Vytautas' own subjects.²⁹

A certain general validity of the argumentation is vividly revealed in the correspondence of the 1450s concerning the attempts of the Teutonic Order, with the help of papal provision, to push through its candidate for the chair of bishop in Tartu. Both the letters obtained by the Chapter from the pope approving the right of the Chapter to select a bishop³⁰ and the letters to the pope procured by the Order reserving the filling of the vacancy when it emerged,³¹ were justified by way of the position of the bishopric *in confinibus scismaticorum et infidelium Rutenorum non sine gravi Christi fidelium animarum periculo*.³² Both the Order³³ and the adversary of the Order – the king of Denmark³⁴ – were listed in the letters as parties protecting against the Russian threat. Although a certain vocabulary and formulations could have been worked out in the papal office in connec-

²⁴ *Ibidem*, vol. 3, nos. 1314, 1322.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, vol. 5, no. 2127; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 2, nos. 154, 158, 159. Cf. *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 8, no. 912; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 766.

²⁶ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 5, no. 2201.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, no. 2202.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, no. 2533.

²⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, vol. 8 no. 649.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, vol. 11, nos. 124, 125.

³¹ *Ibidem*, vol. 11, nos. 48, 164, 583, 863.

³² Quotation: *ibidem*, no. 48.

³³ *Ibidem*, no. 165.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, no. 151.

tion with the Tartu bishopric, this apparently reflects first and foremost the vision of the petitioners with regard to themselves and their roles.³⁵

The need for the unity of the land, particularly in connection with Livonia's position on the frontier of Christendom, was subject that permeated the Teutonic Order's rhetoric when substantiating its attempts at hegemony, be it the case of subjecting the Chapter in Riga to the Rule of the Teutonic Order³⁶ or the right of patronage over the Tallinn bishop, which the Order endeavoured to achieve,³⁷ or the unwanted person of the bishop of Saaremaa.³⁸

Similarly, the proximity of a dangerous environment was also a justification for not carrying out certain actions. In 1378, when the Chapter of Tartu elected Albert Hecht as bishop, he had been approved by the Avignon Pope Clement II, although Urban VI, the pope in Rome, had appointed Dietrich Damerow to be the bishop of Tartu. The Teutonic Order found itself in the situation where it could neither support Clement, by way of Hecht, nor Urban's candidate, Damerow, as bishop.³⁹ In 1379, the Livonian master notified the pope in Rome that Hecht had secured himself in the Vastseliina castle, located on the frontier with the infidel schismatic Russians, and had formed a union with them, but due to the imminent threat from pagan Lithuanians, the army of the master of the Teutonic Order could not attack Hecht.⁴⁰ In 1416, the vassals of north Estonia could not participate in the military campaign in Prussia, as otherwise the country would have remained unprotected against Pskov.⁴¹ In 1424, the grand master of the Teutonic Order advised the Livonian master to write to the pope that it was not possible for him to support the Saaremaa bishop appointed by the pope⁴² as the

³⁵ See also Leonid Arbusow, "Livlands Geistlichkeit vom Ende des 12. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert. Dritter Nachtrag," *Jahrbuch für Genealogie, Heraldik und Sphragistik 1911, 1912 und 1913* (1914): 1-432, here 315.

³⁶ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 11, no. 184; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 4/1, nos. 5-8. See Mario Glauert, "Die Bindung des Domkapitels von Riga an die Regel des Deutschen Ordens," in *Die Domkapitel des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen und Livland*, eds. Radosław Biskup, Mario Glauert (Munich: Aschendorff, 2004), 269-316.

³⁷ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 11, no. 212 (*Rewssen, Littaurn und unglouben*). See Klaus Neitmann, "Der Deutsche Orden und die Revaler Bischofserhebungen im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," in *Reval. Handel und Wandel vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Norbert Angermann and Wilhelm Lenz (Lüneburg: Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1997), 43-86.

³⁸ Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 4/1, no. 137.

³⁹ Paul Girgensohn, "Die Inkorporationspolitik des Deutschen Ordens in Livland," *Mitteilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* 20 (1910): 1-86, here 6-10.

⁴⁰ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 3, nos. 1140, 1146; cf. no. 1144.

⁴¹ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 5, nos. 2071, 2074; cf. no. 2075.

⁴² Juhan Kreem, "Über die Streitigkeiten um den Bischofsstuhl von Ösel-Wiek im 15. Jahrhundert," in *Saare-Lääne piiskopkond. Artiklid Lääne-Eesti keskajast. Bistum Ösel-Wiek. Artikelsammlung zum Mittelalter in Westestland*, ed. Ülla Paras (Haapsalu: Läänemaa Muuseum, 2004), 245-255, here 247 (hereafter: Kreem, "Über die Streitigkeiten").

Pskovians were planning to attack the country.⁴³ In 1426, the Livonian master notified King Sigismund that he could not participate in the fight against the Hussites as the country was living in great danger emanating from the Russians, as *die bösen abetrunzene ungetreuen Rewsszen* wanted to attack this poor land.⁴⁴ Two years later, the archbishop of Riga substantiated that he could not support the war against Hussites financially as his bishopric and the bishopric of Tartu were located *in dem ende der cristenheit*, where infidel Russians, all heretics, pagans and other infidels were plotting evil against the poor Christians.⁴⁵ The archbishop of Riga, in 1439, justified the unwillingness of the town of Tallinn to retaliate against the Russians for having killed a servant of a German nobleman with the excuse of Livonia's difficult and dangerous position in the vicinity of the Russians.⁴⁶ In 1450, the grand master of the Teutonic Order wrote to the Order's proctor in Rome stating he could not allow his subjects to participate en masse in the celebration of the Holy Year of Jubilee in Rome as the country would be depopulated and the "Russians, pagans and the enemies of Christ's Cross" would take advantage of this.⁴⁷ The dangerous vicinity of infidels in 1452 impeded the Livonian master in participating in the war against heretic Bohemians⁴⁸ and the threat from the Russians and the Danish King did not allow him to help the Order in Prussia in 1462.⁴⁹

Thus, it was actually a universal explanation which was raised eagerly. The proximity of infidel Russians and the threat coming from infidel barbarians and schismatics were used as reasons for approving the privileges granted by King Sigismund to the Riga, Tartu, and Saaremaa bishoprics during the 1420s⁵⁰ and for the alliance of the Livonian Teutonic Order with the king of Denmark in 1447.⁵¹ The subject of neighbouring infidels and schismatics was also utilised in the correspondence between the Livonian dignitaries with the Council of Basel in the 1430s.⁵² The argument was also useful for applying for indulgences for chapels and churches in the Tartu diocese.⁵³ In 1438 the Livonian estates appealed to Prussian lords and towns to prevent the grand master from a military expedition against disobedient knights in Livonia, reminding him

⁴³ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 7, no. 181. Cf. Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 3/1, nos. 25, 156.

⁴⁴ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 7, no. 544.

⁴⁵ Stavenhagen, *Akten*, vol. 1, no. 368.

⁴⁶ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 9, no. 455; cf. no. 620. See Arnold Süvalep, *Narva ajalugu*, vol. 1. *Taani- ja orduaeg* (History of Narva, vol. 1. The period of the Danish kings and the Teutonic Order) (Narva: Narva Ajaloo Selts, 1936), 64-68.

⁴⁷ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 11, no. 27.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, no. 221.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, vol. 12, no. 126.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, vol. 7, nos. 246, 460; vol. 8, no. 139; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 4/1, no. 71.

⁵¹ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 10, no. 290.

⁵² *Ibidem*, vol. 8, no. 991; cf. no. 883; vol. 9, nos. 63, 64.

⁵³ *Repertorium germanicum*, vol. 5/1,1, ed. Hermann Diener et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004), nos. 961 (Vastseliina), 990 (Kirumpää). Cf. Selart, *Livland und die Rus'*, 302-303.

of the situation of Livonia on the edge of Christianity, *in dem munde* of the infidel Russians.⁵⁴ In 1458, during another bishop-related conflict in the Saaremaa bishopric, the Danish king supported a candidate who was opposed to the Teutonic Order⁵⁵ as this bishopric had been suffering from frequent attacks of Russians and other schismatics.⁵⁶ In reality, however, the territory of this bishopric, located in the western part of Estonia, had not been directly ravaged by any war campaigns of pagans or schismatics during the period 1270-1560.⁵⁷

Realistic military menace, on the other hand, provided an opportunity for political combinations. In 1424, the Livonian master set as a condition for helping the bishop of Tartu in his war against Pskov that the bishop had to recognise the protective rights of the Teutonic Order over the bishopric.⁵⁸ Thereafter, the bishop appealed to the grand duke of Lithuania, the Polish king, the German king, and the pope that the Order was not assisting him against Pskov.⁵⁹ A similar argument was used once more in 1475, when the church and city of Tartu accused the Livonian master of the Order of an attempt to seize the property of the Tartu church, for this purpose involving Pskov against the bishopric of Tartu in an extremely un-Christian manner.⁶⁰

The subject matter regarding schismatic Russians is vividly expressed in writing in connection with the war between Livonia and Novgorod, 1443-1448. The fact that a union treaty had been concluded between Latin and Greek churches in Florence in 1439 with the participation of the Russian Metropolitan Isidore⁶¹ provides a specific aspect to this. In 1441, when Isidore returned from Italy to Russia, the Grand Prince of Moscow Vasiliï II renounced the recognition of the Church Union, and Novgorod (differently

⁵⁴ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 9, nos. 374, 375, 379 cf. 380; *Akten der Ständetage Preussens unter der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens*, vol. 2, ed. Max Töppen (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1880), no. 60.

⁵⁵ Kreem, "Über die Streitigkeiten," 250-253; Brigide Schwarz, "Alle Wege führen über Rom. Eine „Seilschaft“ von Klerikern aus Hannover im späten Mittelalter," *Hannoversche Geschichtsblätter* 52 (1998), 5-87, here 62-66.

⁵⁶ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 11, nos. 731, 787, 842.

⁵⁷ The local uprising in 1343-1345, however, was treated as apostasy in the sources.

⁵⁸ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 7, no. 177.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, no. 222.

⁶⁰ Goswin von der Ropp, ed. *Hanserecesse, 2. Abtheilung von 1431-1476*, vol. 7 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1892), nos. 292-296. cf. no. 380 (hereafter: *Hanserecesse*). See also Karl E. Napiersky, ed. *Russisch-livländische Urkunden* (St. Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1868), no. 262.

⁶¹ Isidore travelled from Muscovy to Italy via Livonia. In 1438 in a letter the high master of the Teutonic Order named him *metropolitannus aller Rewschen lande und heidenischen ezungen* (my underlining, A.S.), see *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 9, no. 252. The Order supported the negotiations for a union between the Grand Duke of Lithuania Svritigaila and the Council of Basel in order to weaken their competitor Zygmantas in the 1430s, see Kurt Forstreuter, "Der Deutsche Orden und die Kirchenunion während des Basler Konzils," *Annuaire historique conciliorum* 1 (1969), 114-139.

from Pskov) was particularly oppositional towards the union.⁶² Thus, it was primarily the Novgorod Russians who were referred to as schismatics in connection with the war,⁶³ with additional indication of other infidels and pagans from Pskov and Moscow who had or could have come to help them, and also the Tartars, all of whom wanted to go to war *widder die cristenheit*.⁶⁴ The Order also spread a rumour that, besides the Wallachians and Tartars, as well as the *Behemen und Merberen*⁶⁵ (here: heretics), wanted to come and support Novgorod on six hundred horses. In this situation and by using such an argument, the Teutonic Order asked the pope for permission to use the money obtained from the indulgence-selling campaign organised for the support of the union of the Greek and Roman Churches in the territory of the Teutonic Order for warfare against the Russians.⁶⁶ The issue of schismatic Russians also occurred in the letters of the church and city of Tartu during the war against Pskov, 1458-1463.⁶⁷

The threat from Hussites, transferred through Prussia to Livonia, also emerged primarily during the 1420s, when it was a favourable argument against the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas who, in 1422 and 1423, had dispatched his nephew, Zygmunt Korybut, to Prague as viceroy. The Teutonic Order did not fail to mention that the bishops of Livonia were connected with Vytautas, who supported *de Wyklefften czu Behemen*.⁶⁸ Vytautas, on the other hand, personally notified the archbishop of Riga in 1422 that he had sent his nephew to Bohemia with a wish to restore the Roman faith there.⁶⁹ Likewise, in connection with Lithuania and also Moscow, in the fifteenth century the list of Livonia's potential enemies was supplemented by Tartars,⁷⁰ who indeed participated in both the armies of Lithuania and Muscovy. During the Polish-Prussian war, 1409-

⁶² Александр Г. Бобров, *Новгородские летописи XV века* (The Novgorod chronicles of the 15th century) (St. Petersburg: Bulanin, 2001), 194-214; Sach, *Hochmeister*, 72-79 and the bibliography quoted here; Julia Prinz- aus der Wiesche, *Die Russisch-Orthodoxe Kirche im mittelalterlichen Pskov* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), S. 103-113, 167-174.

⁶³ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 9, no. 870; vol. 10, nos. 209, 211, 290, 304, 309, 336, 338, 347, 376, 395, 408. Cf. Goswin von der Ropp, ed. *Hanserecesse, 2. Abtheilung von 1431-1476*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1881), no. 227.

⁶⁴ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 10, nos. 307, 325.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, vol. 10, no. 354.

⁶⁶ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 10, nos. 308, 373, 392, 409, 413, 422, 430, 445, 479, 492, 506; Leonid Arbusow, "Die Beziehungen des Deutschen Ordens zum Ablasshandel seit dem 15. Jahrhundert," *Mitteilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* 20 (1910): 367-478, here 371-377 (hereafter: Arbusow, "Beziehungen").

⁶⁷ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 12, nos. 143, 214.

⁶⁸ Stavenhagen, *Akten*, vol. 1, nos. 287, 288, 289; *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 5, nos. 2512, 2563; cf. nos. 2565, 2576, 2594, 2595; vol. 8, nos. 565, 575, 581.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, vol. 5, no. 2602; cf. nos. 2607, 2613.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, nos. 2012, 2025, 2079 2328. Cf. *ibidem*, vol. 8, nos. 677, 693; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 3/2, 670.

1411, the Teutonic Order underlined that both schismatics and Tartars were fighting in the army of the enemy.⁷¹

The potential enemies of Livonia could also comprise the indigenous peoples of Livonia who, even at the end of the Middle Ages, were sometimes referred to as the neophytes.⁷² Yet an existing example, the letter by the Livonian master to King Sigismund in 1426 (*Auch ist das Undeutsche volk, das zum cristenen gelouben betwungen ist, alszo ungetreue*),⁷³ pertains rather to a concrete situation. At the end of the 1420s, the Livonian seigneurs implemented a coin reform that was extremely detrimental for peasants and towns and thus significantly increased tension in the internal situation of Livonia.⁷⁴

In the fifteenth century, the reasoning for trade restrictions with regard to several towns in Russia was continuously formulated in religious vocabulary. Western European examples of such prohibitions went back to the High Middle Ages and even to era of Charlemagne. For instance, in 1421-1422, Livonian seigneurs prohibited the hauling of goods to Russia that could be used by the Russians and pagans in order to harm Christendom.⁷⁵ The statutes of the Riga provincial synod in 1428 repeated, proceeding from the borrowed example, a similar prohibition with regard to Jews and Saracens, who were irrelevant in the context of Livonia, however, they additionally listed a third group, *perfidii Rutheni*.⁷⁶ Towns tried to oppose such restrictions as economically detrimental,⁷⁷ provided temporary trade embargos were not imposed on their own interests, in order to force their partner into certain concessions. Such a temporary blockade was a customary mechanism for the Hanseatic League, applied not only to Russia, but also in the case of Western European partners.⁷⁸ The export of large horses suitable for warfare was prohibited permanently in Livonia during the fifteenth century.⁷⁹ However, this restriction was substantiated by a need to retain war horses for

⁷¹ Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, 34.

⁷² Tiina Kala, "The Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands into the Western Christian World," in Murray, *Crusade and Conversion*, 3-20, here 18-19 (hereafter: Kala, "Incorporation").

⁷³ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 7, no. 544. See also *ibidem*, vol. 3, no. 1090; Stavenhagen, *Akten*, vol. 1, no. 368; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 4/1, no. 54.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 6, no. 3009; vol. 8, no. 6. See also Ivar Leimus, "Die spätmittelalterliche große Wirtschaftskrise in Europa – war auch Livland davon betroffen?" *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte* 1 (2006): 56-67.

⁷⁵ Stavenhagen, *Akten*, vol. 1, nos. 279, 299 §14, 301.

⁷⁶ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 7, no. 690 §37. Cf. Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 3/2, no. 333.

⁷⁷ Stavenhagen, *Akten und Reesse*, vol. 1, nos. 275, 302. Cf. Ilgvars Misāns, "Die Städte als politischer Faktor in Livland zur Hansezeit," in *Städtisches Leben im Baltikum zur Zeit der Hanse. Zwölf Beiträge zum 12. Baltischen Seminar*, ed. Norbert Angermann (Lüneburg: Carl-Schirren-Gesellschaft, 2003), 21-42, here 37-39.

⁷⁸ Philippe Dollinger, *Die Hanse* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1998), 147-149.

⁷⁹ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 4, nos. 1516 §45, 1656 §6, 1887, 1952; vol. 5, nos. 1957, 2424; vol. 8, no. 321; vol. 9, no. 613; vol. 10, no. 470; Anti Selart, *Eesti idapiir keskajal* (The eastern frontier of Estonia in the Middle Ages) (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 1998), 125-126.

their own country and was imposed not only on those of different faiths but also on their Catholic neighbours.⁸⁰ The journeys of Russian merchants in rural areas of Livonia and their retail activities, detrimental for local traders, were responded to with espionage charges against Russians.⁸¹

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In general, such exploitation of the image of the neighbouring vicinity and the location on the edge of “real” Christianity is not intrinsically distinctive of medieval Livonia. Closer and more distant parallels can be found from all over Eastern Europe, from Finland or Sweden in the north down to the Mediterranean.⁸² At the same time, the material encourages the treatment of this circumstance within the context of the popular subject of ‘the other’. The question, however, arises to what extent such an approach would be justified. The documents quoted do not describe the evil neighbour; the content of his infidelity or schism is not explained.⁸³ Naturally, describing a stranger is simultaneously also self-reflection, in a negative or positive sense.⁸⁴

These examples were meant for internal use in Latin Europe; their aim is not to describe an evil neighbour, but instead to consciously present a desired image of oneself by way of an allegedly evil neighbour. Vicinity played an important role in self-legitimation. Ekaterina Skvairs, a Germanic studies’ scholar from Russia, in her research contrasts the use of words by the Teutonic Order in Russia-related issues with that of the

⁸⁰ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 5, no. 1955; vol. 10, no. 127; *Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch*, Abt. 2, ed. Leonid Arbusow, vol. 1-3 (Riga: Deubner, 1900-1914), here vol. 1 no. 413; Stavenhagen, *Akten*, vol. 3, nos. 304 §7, 326; cf. *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 7, no. 723; Forstreuter, *Berichte*, vol. 3/2, no. 333.

⁸¹ *Hansereceß 2. Abtheilung*, vol. 7, no. 364. See also Marian Biskup and Irena Janosz-Biskupowa, eds. *Visitationen im Deutschen Orden im Mittelalter*, vol. 2: 1450-1519 (Marburg: Elwert, 2004), no. 202, p. 191. Cf. Selart, *Eesti idapiir*, 120-123.

⁸² Nora Berend, “Hungary, ‘the Gate of Christendom,’” in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 195-215; *eadem*, “Défense de la Chrétienté et naissance d’une identité: Hongrie, Pologne et péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58 (2003), 1009-1027; Janusz Tazbir, “The Bulwark Myth,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 91 (2005), 73-97; Janus Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, 1400-1650* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 51-56. Cf. Stéphane Mund, “Constitution et diffusion d’un savoir occidental sur le monde “russe” au Moyen Âge (fin Xe-milieu XVe siècle),” *Le Moyen Âge* 110 (2004), 275-314 and 539-593.

⁸³ An exception is the explanation in the letter of the grand master of the Teutonic Order to the pope in 1403: *Rutheni heretici sunt, Spiritum Sanctum a patre et filio procedere pertinaciter negant. Item Ecclesie Romane non obediunt, nostra Sacramenta prophanant, aliasque multos errores habentes, gens utique attrita fronte, dure cervicis et indominabilis corde existens*, see *Codex Diplomaticus*, vol. 5, no. 137, p. 190.

⁸⁴ See Gabriele Scheidegger, “Das Eigene im Bild von Anderen. Quellenkritische Überlegungen zur russisch-abendländischen Begegnung im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 35 (1987), 339-355; cf. *eadem*, *Perverse Abendland – barbarisches Russland. Begegnungen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im Schatten kultureller Missverständnisse* (Zürich: Chronos, 1993).

Hanseatic towns in Livonia: the former reflected Russians as schismatic enemies, whereas the latter did not reflect an adverse attitude towards the inhabitants of Novgorod, Pskov and other Russian towns.⁸⁵ However, these “Order’s sources” are actually the ones that were created in the course of the so-called great politics of the powers on the Baltic Sea, prepared in the interests of either the Teutonic Order, the archbishops of Riga or other *Landesherren*. These are polemical materials in which vicinity serves as an argument. The relationships of Hanseatic towns with Russian towns were also frequently troubled, but these tensions – which as a rule were extraordinary cases and thus are seemingly predominant in the history of trade only because of the abundant source material produced due to their extraordinariness – were not to be used for or against someone. It was in the interests of both parties to solve trade-related difficulties and they both acknowledged the feasibility of and the need for trade. Also, the Teutonic Order practiced a rhetorically “neutral”, down-to-earth correspondence concerning, for instance, technical issues regarding the wars with Lithuanians or Russians.⁸⁶ Indeed, dangerous adjoining neighbours were not the only scheme for explaining and justifying; historical arguments were used similarly.⁸⁷

Undoubtedly, the inhabitants of Livonia had certain images of and attitudes toward their neighbours, probably to some extent different among the members of different social groupings and residents of different geographical locations.⁸⁸ There is data about at least one nearly positive standpoint applied to those of another faith, dating from fifteenth-century Livonia. In 1430, Tideke von Westen, a Tallinn citizen, accused the bishopric chapter of Saaremaa of usury and wrote the following: *Sulke wokerye unde symonie en is ny gebord van heydenen noch van Joden noch van ketters*.⁸⁹ Yet, still, also in this sentence the pagans, Jews and heretics played a polemic role.

⁸⁵ Екатерина Р. Сквайрс, “Русь и Ганза: модель языкового контакта (The Rus’ and the Hanseatic League: a way of linguistic contact),” in *Славяно-германские исследования*, eds. Александр А. Гутнин and Антон В. Циммерлинг (Moscow: Indrik, 2000), 436–540 here 459–464. Cf. Juozas Jakštas, “Das Baltikum in der Kreuzzugsbewegung des 14. Jhs. Die Nachrichten Philipps de Mézières über die baltischen Geschichte,” *Commentationes Balticae. Jahrbuch des Baltischen Forschungsinstituts* 6–7 1958–59 (1959), 139–183, here 146, 174; Norbert Angermann and Ulrike Endell, “Die Partnerschaft mit der Hanse,” in *Deutsche und Deutschland aus russischer Sicht 11.–17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Dagmar Herrmann (Munich: Fink, 1988), 83–115, here 99–115; Kala, “Incorporation,” 15–19.

⁸⁶ E.g. *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 4, nos. 1920, 1938; vol. 5, nos. 1967, 1978, 1983, 1984, 1989; vol. 9, nos. 1006, 1007, 1014, 1017. Cf. *ibidem*, vol. 7, no. 182; vol. 8, no. 503.

⁸⁷ See Norbert Angermann, “Die mittelalterliche Chronistik,” in *Geschichte der deutschbaltischen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Georg von Rauch (Cologne: Böhlau, 1986), 3–20, here 16–17; Andris Levans, “Die lebendigen Toten. Memoria in der Kanzlei der Erzbischöfe von Riga im Spätmittelalter,” in *Kollektivität und Individualität. Der Mensch im östlichen Europa. Festschrift für Norbert Angermann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Karsten Brüggemann, Thomas M. Bohn and Konrad Maier (Hamburg: Kováč, 2001), 3–35.

⁸⁸ Anti Selart, “Zur Sozialgeschichte der Ostgrenze Estlands im Mittelalter,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 47 (1998): 520–542.

⁸⁹ *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 8, no. 291, 171.

This legitimising vocabulary started to live its own life in which reality might weaken and possibly disappear. Following the Christianisation of Lithuania and Samogitia, there were no pagans, at least in the political sense, living in the immediate vicinity of Livonia. The vicinity of the pagans as an argument, however, remained in continuous use and was gradually replaced by the more ambiguous “infidels” and “enemies of Christianity” without directly connecting the latter with Lithuanians. This probably had to do with a strong chancery tradition, which continued to exist sporadically even after the 1422 peace treaty, when the Teutonic Order finally came to terms with and acknowledged the Christianity of Lithuania.⁹⁰ The Order used the opportunity, however, to stress the fact that actually more schismatics than Catholics lived in Lithuania.⁹¹

In the fifteenth century, the schismatic Russians became the new prime enemies of Livonia. The emergence of this argument regarding its historical development is also associated with Lithuanians. As early as the thirteenth century, the political control of the Lithuanians expanded to the Russian Principality of Polotsk and, at the latest in the fourteenth century, temporarily also to Pskov. For this reason, schismatic Russians were considered to be on the same level with pagan Lithuanians. *Preussenreisen*, regular “crusade tourism” of Western European knights to Prussia, well-known during the fourteenth century, also extended to Livonia, which was in contact with Russian adversaries.⁹² *Preussenreisen* continued to exist even after the Christianisation of Lithuania. Although their reach decreased considerably after 1395, the last trips occurred between about 1410 and 1413 and finally ended around 1420.⁹³ Yet, at the beginning of the fifteenth century the participants in these military raids had to be informed regarding the Teutonic Order’s standpoint on the Poles and Lithuanians.⁹⁴ The titles used to denote the grand dukes of Lithuania (they were the grand dukes of “Lithuanians/Lithuania” and “Russians/Russia”) were also relevant for the vocabulary used when equating Russians with pagans, particularly regarding the phrases put into circulation in Prussia (which had no immediate frontier with non-Lithuanian Russia). Thus, a certain pair of words was established: “infidel Lithuanians and (schismatic) Russians.”⁹⁵

During the last quarter of the fifteenth century it was particularly the emphasising and accentuation of the proximity of schismatic and infidel Russians that helped the

⁹⁰ Kiaupa et al., *History*, 149–150.

⁹¹ Kurt Forstreuter, *Preussen und Russland von den Anfängen des Deutschen Ordens bis zu Peter dem Großen* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1955), 45.

⁹² Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, 202–206.

⁹³ Paravicini, *Preussenreisen*, 30–44; Werner Paravicini, “Die Preussenreisen des europäischen Adels,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 232 (1981), 25–38; Axel Ehlers, “The Crusade of the Teutonic Knights against Lithuania Reconsidered,” in *Crusade and Conversion*, 21–44.

⁹⁴ *Codex Diplomaticus*, vol. 6, no. 140.

⁹⁵ E. g., *ibidem*, vol. 5, nos. 134–135 cf. *Liv-, esth- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 5, no. 2359.

Teutonic Order to continuously substantiate the need to achieve political hegemony in Livonia. Around the year 1480 the Livonian master raised hopes that if the Teutonic Order achieved secular authority over the Riga archbishopric, the Order would be capable of better protecting Livonia from Russians and that *abgesunderte* Russians in Pskov and Novgorod might be converted to Catholicism. By way of the mediation of the Teutonic Order, such rhetoric also occurred in the letters of the emperor. Klaus Neitmann emphasised that, with this, the Teutonic Order justified its ambitions for power, even at the end of the fifteenth century, not power-politically but mission-politically, that is, in a purely medieval way of thinking.⁹⁶ In the last decades of the century, the Teutonic Order in Prussia opposed the intentions of its seigneur, the Polish king, to engage the Order in battles against the Turks and Tartars on the southern frontier of Poland. The argument that Livonia was threatened by Russians, thus making the fragmentation of forces perilous for the country was used once again, together with others.⁹⁷ During the sixteenth century, Livonia was portrayed as the outpost not only of Christendom, but of the entire Holy Roman Empire and the German nation.⁹⁸

Historians have commonly accepted that a substantial change in the direction of a more negative attitude towards Russia, resulting in a complete and explicit cognizance of the “Russian threat”, actually took place at the turn of the fifteenth century following the expansion of Moscow’s authority to the immediate vicinity of Livonian borders. This was associated with the fear of war concurrent with current events: in 1492, the Russians founded Ivangorod castle in the immediate proximity of the Livonian border; in 1494, Hanseatic merchants who had been staying in Novgorod were arrested; escalation of the tension culminated in a war between Russia and Livonia between 1501 and 1503.⁹⁹ A similar development in the attitude towards Russia took place simultaneously in Sweden.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Klaus Neitmann, “Um die Einheit Livlands. Der Griff des Ordensmeisters Bernd von der Borch nach dem Erzstift Riga um 1480,” in *Deutsche im Nordosten Europas*, ed. Hans Rothe (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), 109–137, here 122–125. Cf. Matthias Thumser, “Geschichte schreiben als Anklage. Der Weissensteiner Rezess (1478) und der Konflikt um das Erzstift Riga,” *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 51/2005 (2006), 63–75.

⁹⁷ Matthias Thumser, “Eine neue Aufgabe im Heidenkampf? Pläne mit dem Deutschen Orden als Vorposten gegen die Türken,” in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 139–176, here 146, 159–162, 164–166, 168–170. Cf. Jürgen Sarnowsky, “The Teutonic Order confronts Mongols and Turks,” in *The Military Orders. Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick*, ed. Malcolm Barber (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 253–262, here 261–262.

⁹⁸ Stavenhagen, *Akten*, vol. 3, no. 291 §7, p. 742; cf. no. 302 §14, p. 779 (1532); Valerianus Meysztowicz, ed., *Elementa ad fontium editiones*, vol. 8, *Documenta polonica ex Archivo generali Hispaniae in Simancas*, vol. 1 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Polonicum, 1963), nos. 55, 56. See also Thomas Ott, “*Livonia est propugnaculum Imperii*.” Eine Studie zur Schilderung und Wahrnehmung des Livländischen Krieges (1558–1582/83) nach den deutschen und lateinischen Flugschriften der Zeit (Munich: Osteuropa-Institut, 1996).

⁹⁹ Friedrich Benninghoven, “Rußland im Spiegel der livländischen Schonen Hysthorie von 1508,” in *Rossica externa. Studien zum 15.-17. Jahrhundert. Festgabe für Paul Jobansen zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hugo

Charles Halperin wrote in a generalising manner about how a neighbour of another faith was dealt with in medieval sources: "If one could not speak ill of one's enemy, it was preferable, and certainly safer, not to speak of him at all."¹⁰¹ Although under certain conditions Livonia could be seen as a "frontier society,"¹⁰² Halperin's generalisation would probably not apply to late medieval Livonia. Conflicts, seen as abnormalities and perturbations, were recorded in sources with a much greater frequency than customary relationships, and the audience was also considered in the writing. The aim of writing was often not to describe the potentially adversarial neighbour, but to use – or even misuse him. Frequently the most adversarial image of a neighbour can be obtained from sources which, in the context of the time, did not deal with the relationships with this neighbour, but where the vicinity of the neighbour was itself an argument. The political situation on the edge of the Catholic world became a part of self-imagination, which in turn met similar but competing self-imaginings.

Weczerka (Marburg: Elwert, 1963), 11-35; Kari Tarkiainen, *Se vanha vainooja. Käsitykset itäisestä naapurista Iivana Julmasta Pietari Suureen* (The old adversary. Interpretations of the eastern neighbours from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1986), 16-33; A. A. Щеглов, "Олаус Магнус о России и русских (К вопросу об интерпретации образа) [Olaus Magnus about Russia and the Russians (on the question of interpreting an image)]," *Древнейшие государства Восточной Европы 1999* (2001): 230-238; Anti Selart, "Zur Geschichte der Russen in Livland um die Wende des 15. zum 16. Jahrhundert: Der Vorwand zur Schließung des St. Peterhofes in Novgorod im Jahr 1494," in *Städtisches Leben im Baltikum*, 177-210. See also Arbusow, "Beziehungen," 377-445.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Lindkvist, "Crusading Ideas in Late Medieval Sweden," in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen and Kurt Villads Jensen (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2005), 257-263.

¹⁰¹ Charles J. Halperin, "The Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984), 442-466, here 466.

¹⁰² Norman Housley, "Frontier Societies and Crusading in the Late Middle Ages," in *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean. Studies in Honour of David Jacoby*, ed. Benjamin Arbel (London: Cass, 1996), 104-119; William Urban, "The Frontier Thesis and the Baltic Crusade," in *Crusade and Conversion*, 45-71. Cf. Nora Berend, "Frontiers," in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades*, ed. Helen J. Nicholson (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 148-171.

LIVING ON THE EDGE:
PIRATES AND THE LIVONIANS
IN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

Juhan Kreem

INTRODUCTION

The land ends at the coast and the sea begins. For the concept of edges, the coast is in many ways a complex, one could even say blurred, environment. From the geographic point of view the coastline is clearly defined as the land's end. The humans living in this environment, however, are amphibious. The coastal folk earn an important part of their livelihood on the sea: *navigare necesse est*. Furthermore, the sea seems to form an almost infinite field of action, a world of its own, which from a landlubber's perspective always remains alien and different. But, even if one would want to advocate the idea of an independent maritime world "out there", life at sea cannot be imagined without land. No one lives his entire life at sea; every ship has to call in some port.

Piracy is one of the most fascinating fields of human action in this complicated environment. Although easy to name, it is difficult to deal with. While the phenomenon as a whole is unanimously condemned, there are still bad pirates and good pirates. On the one hand, piracy is clearly outside the norms respected in society. On the other hand, it is strongly bound to different aspects of the same society. Pirates' actions must be accepted, at least by someone who will support them by giving shelter, trading for plunder or hiring them to serve against enemies. Furthermore, some social systems are favourable for the continuous recruitment of new pirates. And finally, in the broader context, a pirate is also dependent on the availability of resources to rob; the predator must have enough prey not to die out.

The focus of this study is the relations of society, the "ordinary world", with the pirates who remained outside of it. My aim is, on the one hand, to point at the edges of the social world but, on the other hand, to also show the communication over these edges. For research into piracy other regions are more famous than Northern Europe, like the Barbary Coast or the Caribbean. This study, however, focuses on the examples from the late-medieval Baltic and especially Livonia. In choosing this region, my aim

was not to find a place for the Baltic Sea in this dubious hall of fame, but rather to show that structural features of piracy can also exist in other regions and when the scale is smaller.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Let us start with legal distinctions. Robbery, treated very severely in normative sources, was a serious crime in medieval society. The punishment for robbers was execution – decapitation in Revalian¹ and many other legal sources. Although it seems clear cut, the edge is blurred by the fact that piracy was one of the first methods of naval warfare at hand, practiced widely. Legitimation of piracy came from the concept of feud (*fede*), the use of violence to pursue one's rights.² The main goal of privateering was to cut into the resources of the opposite party, most commonly by disturbing trade. The advantages were that it was cheap to organize and could pay well.³ The variety of legitimate violent actions against property is, of course, not confined to robbery at sea. A traditional understanding of coastal law (*Strandrecht*), that the goods (or rather everything) which drifts ashore belongs to the local lord, was practiced by coastal peasants until modern times, although even medieval regulations suppressed this kind of expropriation and tried to replace it with compensation for the salvaged goods.⁴

In written records the distinction between licensed privateers and pirates without an “employer”, outlaws, is crucial. In one example out of many letters, on July 29, 1526, the town council of Reval (Estonian Tallinn) testified that a ship and its commanders, Revalians Knuth Sturman and Hans Loren, had been sent out to attack the enemies of the town.⁵ The letter stresses that the leaders and the warriors stand under some kind of authority; the men are *nene Serouers sunder vor unse vtgeschickede krigheslude*. In other letters the same type of men are called *rechtfertige vtbligger*. The term *vtbligger* is difficult to translate. It is formed from *uth* (out) and *leggen* (lay), and, in Middle Low German usage, had a distinct meaning of guards at sea, i.e., those who stay out there. The word *uthliger* is used

¹ See Erik Somelar, “‘Van des keiserlichen Lübschen Rechtes wegen’. Circumstances of Criminality in medieval Reval,” in *Quotidianum Estonicum* (Medium Aevum Quotidianum, Sonderband 5), Krems 1996, 79–102, here 91–92.

² Klaus Friedland, “Maritime Law and Piracy: Advantages and Inconveniences of Shipping in the Baltic,” in *Ships, Guns and Bibles in the North Sea and Baltic States, c. 1350–c. 1700*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes, Thomas Riis, and Frederik Pedersen (London: Tuckwell, 2000), 30–38, here 35.

³ For a recent study on Hamburg and Lübeck, see Andreas Kammler, *Up Eventur – Untersuchungen zur Kaperschiffahrt 1471–1512, vornehmlich nach Hamburger und Lübecker Quellen* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 2005).

⁴ Vilho Niitemaa, *Das Strandrecht in Nordeuropa im Mittelalter* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tietakatemia, 1955).

⁵ A pirate's license issued by Reval to Knuth Sturman and Hans Loren. Reval, July 29, 1526. Tallinna Linnaarhiiv (Tallinn City Archives, hereafter TL.A) f. 230, n. 1, s. BM 1, fol. 20r.

in the sources for the military at sea, which was regarded, at least by their employer, as legal.

How does one term the opposite? In the license mentioned above the adversary is called *mothwillige bandeler vnnd apenbare Serouer*. *Motwillige bandeler* means literally “a free agent”, one who operates by his own free will. In modern German *Mutwill* is a rather negative type of free will, but in Middle Low German it generally lacked this flavour. In one letter by the bailiff of Soneburg (Estonian Maasi) from 1438, the bailiff describes the actions of a small band of Finnish, Swedish, and Estonian origins, based somewhere in the Finnish archipelago, which had been plundering Ösel (Estonian Saaremaa). In this case the pirates are called *lose boven*, “loose guys”.⁶

For the distinction between legal and illegal piracy it was thus important that those out at sea be subject to some kind of authority; free also means outside the law.⁷ The word for outlaw in modern German, *vogelfrei*, free as a bird, captures this aspect precisely. In their correspondence the towns kept an eye on the issue of authority; pirates were rarely just pirates, but often pirates in someone’s service (Danzig, Lübeck, Reval, or the king of Sweden). Nevertheless, as strict as the distinction might appear in a legal sense, the problem of control always remained. The privateers were out at sea and might change their allegiance.

“FREE COMPANIES” OF THE BALTIC SEA

The most famous “free companies” of the Baltic Sea in the last decades of the fourteenth century were the so-called *Vitalienbrüder*, the Victual Brethren.⁸ In the struggle for the Danish crown the dukes of Mecklenburg called on “all those who want to do damage to the Danes” to join them. It is not clear where the name Victual Brethren derives from; it might be because these men supplied the city of Stockholm with victuals when it was besieged by Danes in 1389. It is more likely, however, that the word indicates a loose fraternity for earning a living, victuals. Initially the Victual Brethren served the counts of Mecklenburg in their fight against Denmark, later they served on the coast of the North Sea under different nobles of eastern Frisia, on the coast of the North Sea.

⁶ *Liv-, Est und Curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 1/1–12, 2/1–3, ed. Friedrich Georg von Bunge, Hermann Hildebrand, Philipp Schwartz, Leonid Arbusow, and August Bulmeringcq (Reval, Riga, Moskau, 1853–1914) (hereafter LECUB), vol. 9, no. 292.

⁷ For this aspect of freedom, see Ernst Schubert, *Fabrendes Volk im Mittelalter* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1995), 63–65.

⁸ Friedrich Benninghoven, “Die Vitalienbrüder als Forschungsproblem,” in *Kultur und Politik im Ostseeraum und im Norden 1350–1450* (Visby: Museum Gotlands Fornsal, 1973), 41–53; Matthias Puhle, *Die Vitalienbrüder. Klaus Störtebeker und die Seeräuber der Hansezeit* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus-Verlag, 1992). For the latest state of research see *Störtebeker – 600 Jahre nach seinem Tod*, Hansische Studien 15, ed. Wilfried Ehbrecht (Trier: Porta-Alba-Verlag, 2005).

Victual Brethren were even hired by the bishop of Dorpat against the Teutonic Order in 1396⁹. The peak of the activities of the Victuals Brethren on the Baltic was in the last decade of the fourteenth century, but this does not mean that there was no piracy before or after that date on the Baltic.

There were different pirate bands on the Baltic Sea who changed their affiliation in the course of the fifteenth century. For example, in 1427, Wendish towns hired three leaders, named Bartholomeus Voet, Klaus Glokener, and Michel Rute, to fight Eric of Pomerania, king of the union of three Nordic kingdoms.¹⁰ These three men had earlier been practicing piracy and their fleet consisted of two large ships, seven small ships, and 300 men. The leaders agreed to serve Lübeck in exchange for safe conduct. These units then plundered Bergen in 1429. During the war, the problem was again that some of the pirates did not have a strong allegiance, but were out on their own: *de uppe ere eghene eventure uthe sind*.¹¹ After the peace was signed in 1431, Bartholomeus Voet became unemployed, but as the situation in Prussia headed towards war, the grand master of the Teutonic Order was hoping to hire him and his men.¹² In Prussia the so-called *Schiffskinder* had a distinct place in the warfare of the early fifteenth century. *Schiffskinder*, like *ausliager*, is a relatively neutral term, but it may also occur in the same phrase together with *zeerouber*.

In 1430 one of these maritime units under the leadership of Paul Shutte also appeared in Reval. Shutte's background is unknown; he is called only master in the sources, but he had three ships (*barse*, *snikee* and *schuttenboot*) and over 100 men at his disposal.¹³ Most likely his unit was one of the many naval units active at that time on the Baltic Sea, and as the Revalian sources do not mention his affiliation, he might have been free for hire. Reval hired this naval unit to protect a convoy to Lübeck. The price was to be 160 *biscopsgulden*, out of which Shutte wanted 10. In this sense the leaders of the maritime military units of the late-medieval Baltic Sea closely resemble the Italian *condottieri*, who came to someone's service with a unit already formed and always appeared where there was an employer or a conflict, that is, "work" to do.¹⁴ The pay for

⁹ Theodor Schieman, "Die Vitalienbrüder und ihre Bedeutung für Livland," *Baltische Monatschrift*, 31 (1884), 305-318, here 313-315; reprinted in: Theodor Schieman, *Historische Darstellungen und Archivalische Studien* (Hamburg: E. Behre, 1886), 1-18.

¹⁰ See Sven Ekdahl, "'Schiffskinder' im Kriegsdienst des Deutschen Ordens. Ein Überblick über die Werbungen von Seeleuten durch den Deutschen Orden von der Schlacht bei Tannenberg bis Zum Brester Frieden (1410-1435)," in *Kultur und Politik im Ostseeraum und im Norden 1350-1450* (Visby: Museum Gotlands Fornsal, 1973), 239-274, here 244-245.

¹¹ *Hanserecesse* (hereafter HR) 1, vol. 8, no. 194.#7, p. 144.

¹² Ekdahl, "Schiffskinder", 264-265.

¹³ LECUB, vol. 8, no. 363, 360.

¹⁴ Tapio Salminen, "Jumalan ystävät ja koko maailman viholliset." Merirosvous, kaapparitoiminta ja vitaliaanit keskiajan itämerellä [The friends of god and the enemies of the whole world. Piracy privateering

these units, however did not necessarily come in cash. It was primarily the booty they were able to take.

ALLIES, ENEMIES AND VICTIMS

Seamen remain outsiders for the community on the land: in Reval it was, for example, repeatedly prohibited for sailors to stay in town overnight.¹⁵ In the case of the maritime military, pirates, this exclusion must have been even stronger. A self-description has come down to us of the *Vitalienbrüder* as the friends of God and the enemies of the whole world.¹⁶ This statement probably originated from a Biblical paraphrase of the Epistle of Saint James 4:4,¹⁷ current in the works of many medieval authors, among them St. Bernard.¹⁸ Some mercenaries expressed their relations with the world in a similar manner.¹⁹ This confrontation is a clear statement of being outside the world, but it alludes to another self-perception of the mercenaries as pious *lansquenets* (*fromme Landsknechte*).²⁰

It is clear, that one cannot be at war with the whole world. Even if a pirate feeds himself from his booty and is not paid as a mercenary, he has to have friends and a sheltered harbour somewhere in the world. These “pirates’ nests” tended to develop in frontier regions where great powers had to rely on irregulars because of a lack of resources and the border provided an opportunity to plunder on the other side. The most famous naval frontier of this kind was the Mediterranean, where the ports of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli in North Africa or Senj on the coast of the Adriatic²¹ served as bases.

and Victuals Bretheren in medieval Baltic Sea], *Konkkavieraideiden pidot* ed. Jarmo Peltola, Pirjo Markkola (Tampere: Vastapaino, 1996), 181-204.

¹⁵ In the town regulations (*Bursprake*) of late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. See Paul Johansen, Heinz von zur Mühlen, *Deutsch und Undeutsch im mitte- lalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Reval* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1973), Anhang 1, here 441, no. 74: *Item ein juwelke schipman de sal to shippe slape[n], bi 1 ferding, unde de schipbern sollen dat melden, we dez nicht dot, deme vogede, unde de sal dat gelt uphaven to dez radez behof.*

¹⁶ HR I, vol. 4, no. 453. A letter of the German merchants from Brügge to the Hanseatic meeting in Lübeck form the year 1398: *dat se weren Godes vrende unde al der werlt ryande, sunder der van Hamborch unde der van Bremen.*

¹⁷ Vulgata: *adulteri nescitis quia amicitia huius mundi inimica est Dei quicumque ergo voluerit amicus esse saeculi huius inimicus Dei constituitur.*

¹⁸ PL 184: EPISTOLA CUJUSDAM DE DOCTRINA VITAE AGENDAE Seu de Regimine cordis, oris et operis: *Amator Dei inimicus est mundi; quoniam amicus mundi, inimicus est Dei.*

¹⁹ Puhle, *Die Vitalienbrüder*, 153, Jean de Gouges.

²⁰ Schubert, *Fabrendes Volk*, 416-417.

²¹ On the piracy in the Adriatic Sea see Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj, Piracy, Banditry and the Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

There was also rivalry on the North Atlantic between the powers who were eager to support irregulars to damage the opposite party.²²

Such sharp divisions as the Muslim frontier on the Mediterranean did not exist on the Baltic. The patchwork of rival powers on the Baltic rim was, however, sufficient for the existence of piracy. Other disturbances besides those between the major powers of the region stimulated piracy and created bases; for example, in Gotland during the times of Victual Brethren at the end of the 14th century.²³ Piracy was also used to pursue goals on minor occasions; numerous so-called private wars could be listed. Piracy was supported, for example, by the commander of the Teutonic Order in Memel (Lithuanian Klaipėda), Johann von Sunger, against Lübeck in the period from 1467 to 1473,²⁴ by the dismissed land marshall of Livonia, Gert Mallinckrode, against Teutonic Order in Livonia from 1468 onwards,²⁵ and by a Scandinavian nobleman, Wilhelm van dem Felde, against Reval in the 1480s.²⁶

The relations of the Livonian towns with different maritime military bands are complicated. Scanning through the documents of Reval, one would not like to label Reval as an especially pirate-friendly place. Even though the town occasionally undertook campaigns against pirates one is inclined to say that in many cases the attitudes of the Revalian town council might be characterized as neutral. In the correspondence of Reval one finds different situations when it was engaged with privateers. When Reval was neutral in some conflict different pirates were staying in the vicinity of Reval and received safe conduct for frequenting its port, e.g., the dissolution of the Union of Kalmar, i.e., the wars between Sweden and Denmark.

For example, in 1535, a Swedish royal pirate, Albert Perszon, anchored in the vicinity of Nargen (Estonian Naissaar). From there a letter was written to Reval asking for a safe conduct for two weeks, proposing some trade. Albert wanted to sell some *osemund* (copper ore) and butter and buy beer.²⁷ The Revalians granted safe conduct, but then Albert discovered that a vessel in the harbour had taken a Swedish *schute* (a small coastal vessel) at sea. In a letter to Reval Albert asked for permission to attack the enemies of his lord.²⁸ How things could have developed is shown in documents from the

²² John Rigby Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998), 80-82: Bayonne (anti-Spain), La Rochelle (anti-French Catholic vessels), and Dunkirk (anti-English).

²³ Friedrich Benninghoven, "Die Gotlandfeldzüge des Deutschen Ordens 1398-1408," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 13 (1964): 421-477.

²⁴ Oskar Stavenhagen, "Johann Wolthuss von Herse, 1470-71, Meister des Deutschen Ordens zu Livland," *Mitteilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est-, und Kurlands* 17 (1900), 1-88, here 26.

²⁵ Stavenhagen, "Johann Wolthuss", 11.

²⁶ Gustav Adolf Donner, *Striden om arvet efter köpmannen Jakob Frese 1455-1510* (Åbo: Holger Schildt, 1930), 71 ff.

²⁷ TLA, BM 1, fol. 55.

²⁸ TLA, BM 1, fol. 62.

year 1538. Then it came to direct hostilities of Revalians with a privateer of Lübeck, Markus Donnert, who was sent out to prey on Dutch merchantmen. He appeared in the vicinity of Reval and, in his own words, took some oxen from the coast as he was not allowed to trade in the port.²⁹ According to a letter from Reval to Lübeck, however, Markus had attacked the port of Reval at night and taken a ship with him from there.³⁰ On another occasion, in 1523, Swedish privateers seized a cargo of the bailiff of Wessenberg. The Revalians were accused of supporting this band, and there is evidence for certain that the Revalians had some contacts with Swedish privateers at that time. It is, however, also evident that the townspeople had losses during this attack as well.³¹ It is apparent that Reval did not particularly like such bands in its vicinity, but on the other hand, the possibilities were limited for keeping them at a distance.

This again raises the issue of control; the coastal area was by nature difficult to master. Furthermore, exercising authority in one particular region did not necessarily mean that control was equally strong everywhere in the region. The same problems which the Revalians had with pirates lurking around nearby islands can also be traced in the correspondence of officials of the Teutonic Order. Although the passage between the islands is identified as the sea of the bailiff of Soneburg (*sebe unsers ordens voithe zu Soneburg*) in the correspondence, the bailiff did not want to take responsibility for everything happening there.³²

In a complex net of hierarchies and affiliations along the Late Medieval Baltic Sea, where the modern centralized state had not yet arrived, it was also difficult to say explicitly who was on whose side. Thus, the target(s) of pirate's actions was not clear enough. Damage occurred when pirates defined the enemy's party *ad hoc* and the definition happened to be too broad. To minimize risk, merchants divided their goods and shipped them on several vessels at the same time; one ship carried the goods of tens of merchants. Thus, it happened that "neutral" parties were damaged when a ship was seized.

LIVELIHOOD AND COMMERCE

Piracy, whether legal or illegal, could be considered one way to make a living. The crew not only had to be fed, but also paid. Some of the booty taken by pirates, e.g., victuals,

²⁹ TLA, BM 1, fol. 33.

³⁰ *Regesten aus zwei Missivbüchern des XVI. Jahrhunderts im Revaler Stadt-Archiv*, ed. Gotthard von Hansen (Reval: Franz Kluge, 1895), II no. 41. (June 29, 1538).

³¹ Juhan Kreem, "Paul von Steinen. Ein Gebietiger des Deutschen Ordens in Estland", in *Aus der Geschichte Alt-Livlands. Festschrift für Heinz von zur Mühlen zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Bernhart Jähnig, Klaus Militzer (Münster: Lit 2004), 239-257, here 249-250.

³² See Juhan Kreem, "Maasilinna foogt ja mereteed," [The Bailiff of Soneburg and maritime routes], *Eesti Meremuuseumi Toimetised* 3 (Tallinn: Meremuuseum, 2002), 23-30.

could be consumed directly, but most of it had to be traded to make some use of it. The same applied to cash; the only way to utilise it was to purchase something from someone. The romantic image of pirates' buried treasure reflects only one marginal aspect of pirate economy. Commerce was the side of piracy where ties with the rest of society were most obvious.³³

It is, however, difficult to study this in detail because of the sources. Documentation focuses on the stolen goods first when they were stolen and second if and when they were later identified. In the first case one can believe that the merchants reports of their losses are fairly comprehensive and reliable. Cases of identifying the goods later provided more problems. Even if there are court materials on cases of stolen goods, the question always remains of how to identify the fact that at some stage the commodity has changed owners in a violent way. It is almost impossible to assess the quantity of stolen goods in circulation, not least because the traders wanted to conceal the origin of these goods. Normative sources are very negative towards commerce in plunder. About 1414 the Reval Town Council, applying similar decisions of other Hanseatic towns, issued a bylaw which prohibited trade in stolen goods.³⁴ But, as noted above, the men of Albert Perszon traded with Revalians.

It appears, then, that just as there was a licensed privateer, so there were also goods which were not regarded as stolen, but as a prize taken from the enemy and thus perfectly legal. In the contracts concerning military actions at sea, the sharing of eventual booty is an issue. In 1430, for example, when Lübeck hired mercenaries to man merchant ships bound for Reval, it was also agreed that if the fleet and its mercenaries should capture enemy ships half of the prize belonged to the merchants and half would fall to the mercenaries.³⁵ Later agreements on future booty vary in complexity.³⁶ The towns tried to insure that third parties would not be injured. In the wars against pirates the aspect of property became even more complicated, especially in the cases when the prize was stolen goods. For example, when the grand master of the Teutonic Order purged Memel of pirates he took the goods he found there as remuneration for his efforts, which later brought him accusations from Lübeck.³⁷

Roving and dividing booty is also connected with the image of a rebel. A contemporary synonym for the Victual Brethren was *likedeler*, those who divide evenly,³⁸ which places pirates in opposition to the world order in another way. For this kind of rebels against the *ancien régime* Eric Hobsbawm has coined the concept of social bandit, meaning those who enjoy close ties with society and admiration of the common people,

³³ Bracewell, *The Uskoks*, 108-118.

³⁴ Johansen, Mühlen, *Deutsch und Undeutsch*, Anhang 1, 445 # 93.

³⁵ LECUB, vol. 8, no. 272, see also 58.

³⁶ From Lübeck 1472 see *Hansisches Urkundenbuch* (henceforth *Hans. UB*), vol. 10, no. 109.

³⁷ *Hans. UB*, vol. 10, no. 273, p. 180. note 1 (1474.).

³⁸ Puhle, *Die Vitalienbrüder*, 40-41.

in contrast to criminals, the real outsiders.³⁹ This social aspect of piracy has been stressed in the later literary tradition on the Victual Brethren, making one of them, Klaus Störtebecker, a kind of German Robin Hood, fighting against the greedy merchant patricia of the Hanseatic city councils.⁴⁰ The whole discussion on social banditry is too vast to be treated here. Outsiderness is not an absolute but a relative category; better to discuss the number of ties the outsiders had with the rest of society. But even when banditry might have traits of social protest or is a desperate reaction to a hopeless situation of earning a living it is clear that one robs those who have and not those who have not. Furthermore, it could be argued that dividing the booty could not have been that even when taking into account everything else known about comparable military units: the captains got a captain's share and the able seamen the part belonging to them.⁴¹

PIRATE LIFE

Turning to individuals, the formation, dynamics and dissolution of pirate bands is difficult to trace in detail. We know the careers of some leaders, but the constitution of their crews remains largely unknown. It is known that (at least a large number of) the leaders of the Victual Brethren were recruited from the lower nobility, who had sufficient starting capital for an expensive naval enterprise but lacked a stable income from land.⁴² It can be safely assumed that recruitment from the coastal population provided most of the rank and file. It is also quite apparent that these bands were not very stable, but depended on the needs of the time.

There is slightly more evidence on the constitution of the naval forces organized by the towns for particular purposes. In Revalian sources it is often said that the port guard together with *Mündriche* (that is, the sailors of the small unloading vessels in the port of Reval) and the fishermen were after some pirate gang.⁴³ In other words, the people, hired for the job by town were fit for maritime tasks because of their daily living. Furthermore, a naval action could be more profitable for them than their daily work. In the Tallinn City Archives some enrolment lists have been preserved of the men hired for a naval campaign against probably the most famous pirate of the Baltic Sea, Sören Norby, in 1526.⁴⁴ Although it is difficult to say something decisive about

³⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000).

⁴⁰ Puhle, *Die Vitalienbrüder*, 159 ff.

⁴¹ Division of booty in Reval 1526: TLA, Be 5, fol. 4-5, here fol. 5r.

⁴² Puhle, *Die Vitalienbrüder*, 59-63.

⁴³ Wilhelm Stieda, "Mündriche und Träger in Reval," *Beiträge zur Kunde Est-, Liv und Kurlands* 7 (1910), 86-152.

⁴⁴ TLA, Be 6. fol. 223ff ja 226ff. More on this see Juhan Kreem, "Stadt im Seekrieg: Revaler Expedition gegen Sören Norby im Jahre 1526", in *Rund um die Meere des Nordens. Festschrift für Hain Rebas*, ed. Michael

social background of these men, one can estimate with the help of names, positions, and salaries. These rolls list mercenaries of Low German or Scandinavian origin, but also Revalians. It can be claimed that as in later centuries the crews were rather international.

Maritime mobile flocks also provided troops to hire for mainland actions. Sven Ekdahl has shown this practice in detail for Prussia.⁴⁵ There is plenty of evidence on how Livonian powers were eager to get troops on land. In the mercenary business the resources at sea were kept in mind.⁴⁶ There is evidence on incidents when soldiers were accused because of their pirate past, for example, the case of a certain Jacob Kroger in 1488.⁴⁷ He was in the service of the bailiff of the Teutonic Order in Narva and was suspected of having earlier been in a pirate band which was destroyed in the vicinity of Reval. On the order of the Revalian town council, Kroger was imprisoned in Narva. Bailiff's men freed him from prison and this caused a lengthy court case in which the Livonian Master of the Teutonic Order and Reval had to intervene. Because Kroger was already under the protection of the bailiff, his imprisonment in the town was against the law, but from the perspective of the town his violent liberation was against the law. This case seems to have rolled on for years. In 1500, when the master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, Wolter von Plettnberg, entered Reval, some of the men who had freed the pirate are mentioned as those who wished to be pardoned.⁴⁸ It is likely that Reval refused to give safe conducts to the men who had acted violently in Narva.

The story of Jacob Kroger is not unique. Other mercenaries with complicated pasts also appeared in Livonia.⁴⁹ In some cases the town remembered its enemies for a strikingly long time, with dramatic consequences. In 1426, the Revalians executed Claus Dock, an envoy of the bailiff of the Finnish castle Vyborg.⁵⁰ Claus, a former merchant, had once led a feud against Reval; consequently he was accused of piracy. Although he

Engelbrecht, Ulrike Hanssen-Decker, and Daniel Höffker (Heide: Boyens 2008), 145-153. On Norby see Lars J. Larsson, *Sören Norby och Östersjöpolitiken 1523-1525* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1986).

⁴⁵ Ekdahl, "Schiffskinder", *passim*.

⁴⁶ Juhan Kreem, "The Business of War. Mercenary Market and Organisation in Reval in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 49:2 (2001), 26-42.

⁴⁷ Arnold Süvalep, *Narva ajalugu* (The History of Narva) (Narva: [s.n.], 1936), 96-98. See also Kreem, "The Business of War," 32-35.

⁴⁸ TLA, Aa 23b, fol. 13v. Retold in modern German by Eugen von Nottbeck, "Fragment einer Revaler Chronik," *Beiträge zur Kunde Ehst-, Liv- und Kurlands* 4 (1894), 450-468, here 456.

⁴⁹ The bailiff of Neuschloss (est. Vasknarva) had problems with one of the men from Memel, Hermann Kypp, who had been to sea, practicing piracy. See the letter of the bailiff to Reval TLA, BB 52 XV, fol. 1, (1480?).

⁵⁰ On him see Tapio Salminen, "Dock, Klaus (a merchant-mercenary-privateer-pirate in early 15th-century Gulf of Finland)," in *Suomen Kansallisbiografia* 2, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura (Helsinki, 2003), 392-394 (also on: <http://haku.kansallisbiografia.fi>).

was already under the protection of the Finnish bailiff, the town executed him. This led to a long conflict between Reval and Vyborg, mediated by the Livonian master.⁵¹

The town might also turn against its former allies. When the Livonians were waging war against the Muscovites in 1501-1503, the Revalian harbour was used as a base for the pirates Mauritius Roleffsson and Hans Klunkerth. From there they disturbed the trade with the Russians in the eastern end of Gulf of Finland. After the war, however, when they, as the servants of the Swedish realm, were involved in the capture of a Danish envoy, the Revalians imprisoned them. The subsequent correspondence reveals how delicate the situation was. The Danes demanded that the Revalians punish Klunkerth and Roleffsson; the Swedes wanted the men freed, and the Revalians wanted to have peace with both sides.⁵²

In other words, a pirate's life was always insecure. It is no wonder that tensions emerged from the fact that the person earning his living in that particular way was sometimes a licensed pirate, privateer, sometimes licensed by the wrong side, and sometimes an unlicensed rover. One of the main tools a town had for administering this insecurity was the safe conduct (*Geleit*). This juridical tool enabled a town to communicate with the outside world because, for the time being, it set aside all possible conflicts. One can see also the opposite; when a safe conduct was not granted it automatically meant that the person was banned from the town. Ignoring this could cost a life. From the pirates' point of view, a safe conduct could even be regarded as a kind of pay or award. Although not a pardon for earlier crimes, it still enabled communication with the world otherwise than through arms.

CONCLUSION

Piracy is, on the one hand, clearly defined in legal terminology and placed outside the norms of society. Pirates were outlaws acting out of the reach. On the other hand, piracy is practiced by humans against humans and thus definitely belongs to this world. Furthermore, the same pirates, outsiders, were readily used in naval warfare. Thus, one may speak of the temporal integration of pirates into this world. There are clearly different levels of integration: there are genuine outsiders and there are mercenaries more closely bound to some community on the land. In general, however, it was possible to transgress the strict legal boundary.

⁵¹ Juhana Kreem, *The Town and its Lord. Reval and the Teutonic Order (in the fifteenth century)*. (Tallinn: Tallinna linnaarhiiv, 2002), 167-171. See also Hans Gilllingstam, *Ätterna Oxenstierna och Vasa under Medeltiden. Släkt-historiska studier* (Families of Oxenstierna and Vasa in the Middle Ages. Genealogical studies) (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1952), 184-198.

⁵² Kreem, *The Town and its Lord*, 175-176.

Legal definitions are drawn by authorities. The crucial question is, however, to what extent these authorities could control the space they created and claimed to possess. It appears that the possibility of controlling actions at sea was quite limited. Moreover, medieval powers could not always control even actions on land. These circumstances created space for independent action in the frontier regions of conflicting authorities. Although, because of these borders, the heroes of one side were the villains of the other, these roles could be exchanged, negotiated, and traded. Crossing boundaries is a natural characteristic of frontiersmen. What this brings about is insecurity, which is another important feature of life on the edge.

DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN:
LIFE AT THE *FLURGRENZE* IN MEDIEVAL AND TRADITIONAL
NARRATIVE

Tom Pettitt

Exploring the edges of the medieval world, and the concepts of edges in the medieval world, is one way of meeting the criticism of Frits van Oostroom, offered in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*'s recent stock-taking of the field, to the effect that: "... modern medieval studies has neglected to historicize 'space'".¹ The following contribution will be from the perspectives of performance culture (which includes theatre but is much more than theatre), and particularly of discursive culture (which includes literature but is much more than literature). Performance culture includes activities which take place in and on the spatial environment as a terrain, but which also help to define that environment as a cultural artefact, as a landscape. Within discursive culture are to be found discourses which engage directly with the spatial environment, such as legends assigning significance to particular geographical features, and others which construct a fictional landscape displaying a complex relationship with both the real thing and the way it is conceptualized in the mentality of the time. This too, not least in connection with narrative, is a somewhat neglected field, and promises significant insights. As Laura Howes points out in a recent pioneering study, rather than mere background or context for the action, narrative space is both a reflection of contemporary attitudes, and a significant *literary* quality; it reveals:

... deep patterns of cultural assumptions ranging from accepted political and social structures to aesthetic and literary traditions. In many texts, descriptions of place help tie a work to a convention or a particular genre, and so serve as an important interpretative signal to the reader. In other works, descriptions of

¹ Frits van Oostroom, "Spatial Struggles: Medieval Studies between Nationalism and Globalization," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 105 (2006): 5. For a significant recent contribution see nonetheless *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

place act on their own, almost as independent characters, influencing plot development directly.²

Not least in a subsistence economy, the boundary between one household's or one community's territory and that of neighbouring units determined both its relative well-being and status, and the same applies to the edge of the land which is productive as tilled fields or pasture – the *Flurgrenze* as defined in the Grimms' *Wörterbuch* (*limes agrorum*). This significance is further multiplied by the importance of edges and boundaries in terms of protection: both the walls and moats which protected towns and castles from attack by other people and the barriers which protected farm animals from wild animals or kept those same farm animals out of fields in cultivation. Contributing to the maintenance of the fences or other structures defining and securing a community's boundaries was a duty incumbent on its members, and sanctions could be imposed if it was neglected.³ Indeed there seems to have been a whole art of rural boundary-making, deploying and combining walls (dry-stone and mortared), hedges, fences (or quickset fences which grew into hedges), ditches and banks, with well established combined heights for different purposes: 9 feet to confine or keep out deer; four and a half feet for cattle; three feet for sheep, etc.⁴

Not surprisingly the functional significance of boundaries and edges is reflected in cultural activities and artefacts, for example in the segment of performance culture conventionally distinguished as pageantry. The lines drawn on the landscape by the routes of parades and processions are unavoidably superimposed on the lines already inscribed there in the form of edges & boundaries, visible or invisible,⁵ and in many cases the parades acknowledge the existing boundaries, say by taking routes which *follow* an existing boundary, or *approach* and emphatically *halt* at an existing boundary, or cross an existing boundary in a way which draws attention to it. Thus in the aptly named “beating of the bounds” English parishes annually confirmed and asserted their boundaries with neighbouring parishes, with all that this implied for their rights within the boundaries and their lack of obligations beyond them, by a perambulation which both followed their course and paused for symbolic ceremony at customary landmarks.⁶ In some countries, at least as recorded in more recent centuries, individual farmsteads undertook a similar boundary perambulation, in German-speaking regions for example

² Laura L. Howes, “Narrative Time and Literary Landscapes in Middle English Poetry,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, ed. John Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainesville etc.: University of Florida Press, 2002) 192-193 (hereafter: *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*).

³ Karin Altenberg, *Experiencing Landscapes* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 20.

⁴ See *ibidem*, 41 for a sketch of a complex structure; for further elaborations and the dimensions see Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (London: British Museum, n.d.), 63 and 65 (hereafter: Landsberg, *Medieval Garden*).

⁵ As discussed in my “The Morphology of the Parade”, *European Medieval Drama* 6 (2003 for 2002): 1-30.

⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 136-139.

leading newly acquired cattle around the perimeter of the fields in a symbolic introduction to the establishment -- *die Einstellung des Viehs*.⁷ The customary parades which most emphatically halt at a boundary they have approached are those whose purpose is to expel something negative from the community – usually death, winter, or Lent – in the form of an effigy:⁸ there are even (in the present context highly interesting) instances of members of adjacent communities coming to blows as one attempted to cast out death across the boundary and into the territory of the other.⁹ Parades which emphasize boundaries by crossing them include the entry procession of a visiting monarch which pauses at the gate of a city for elaborate welcoming ceremonies and sometimes spectacular pageantry before entering. As urban historian Keith Lilley observes of Norwich's welcome for Queen Elizabeth Woodville in 1469:

Such lavish arrangements were clearly intended to reflect civic unity and pride, but the use of the gate as the stage for the display is surely ... significant, for it marked the symbolic boundary of the civic space of the city. The queen's entrance through it could be seen as a mark of corporate assent.¹⁰

Equally symptomatic is the substantial body of superstition which was associated with boundaries and gave rise to religious or magical practices. In an informative and entertaining survey of "Boundaries, Portals and Other Magical Spots in Folklore," folklorist Wayland D. Hand notes that the boundaries between communities or properties were numinous places where diseases could be got rid of, witches and sorcerers trapped, criminals executed, and love divinations carried out.¹¹ Pageantry and superstition are combined in the almost obsessive concern in rural Ireland with the vulnerability of farm boundaries on May Day (when it was believed milk could be stolen by supernatural means). Not merely were farm gates and cow house doors locked, but nothing belonging to the household or its farm was allowed to pass beyond its boundaries; visitors, particularly women, were not allowed in; when a woman from the household collected the day's first bucket of water from the well she perambulated

⁷ Wayland D. Hand, *Boundaries, Portals and Other Magical Spots in Folklore*, Katharine Briggs Lecture No. 2 November 1982 (London: Folklore Society), 4 and 8 (hereafter: Hand, *Boundaries, Portals*).

⁸ Waldemar Liungmann, *Traditionswanderungen Rhein-Jenessi. Ein Untersuchung über das Winter- und Tодаustragen*, vol. I, FFC 129 (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Sciences, 1941), ch. XII: 'Die deutschen Varianten des Tодаustragens'; Robert Pearson Flaherty, "Tодаustragen: The Ritual Expulsion of Death at Mid-Lent – History and Scholarship," *Folklore* 103 (1992): 40-55.

⁹ *Bräuche und Feste im fränkischen Jahreslauf*, ed. Josef Dünninger and Horst Schopf (Kulmbach: Stadtarchiv 1971), 49. Such a conflict would be exactly the reverse of English inter-village (the original?) football in which the aim was to convey the "ball" (which evidently had positive connotations) across the boundary and into one's own territory: see Francis Peabody Magoun Jr., "Shrove Tuesday Football," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 13 (1931): 9-46.

¹⁰ Keith D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages 1000 – 1450* (London: Palgrave, 2002) p. 244 (hereafter: Lilley, *Urban Life*).

¹¹ Hand, *Boundaries, Portals*, 69.

the boundaries with it before returning. The boundary could also be sprinkled with consecrated “Easter water,” or farmers and their labourers could perambulate the boundaries carrying farm implements or seed corn.¹²

The value of these rather quaint superstitions and rites is enhanced if we deploy the attractive thesis of Aaron Gurevich with regard to medieval Scandinavia that this very local distinction between the homestead and what lay beyond its fields – the boundary between what was *innangarths* and what was *utangarths* – had an exact analogy in the world view reflected in Nordic mythology: the distinction between the *Mittgarthr* which was the home of the gods and civilization and the *Utgarthr* of the more primitive and ever-threatening giants.¹³

The significance assigned to spatial boundaries is also reflected in medieval discursive culture, most obviously and practically in functional texts like land charters which identify the parcel of land subject to the transaction precisely in terms of its edges, and indeed effectively take the form of stage directions for the performance of a perambulation of the boundaries: “from the swing-gate along the paved road to the dyke-gate, from the dyke-gate to the third gate,” to quote an Anglo-Saxon example; symptomatically while the legal packaging is in Latin, the “route” of the boundary is specified in the vernacular.¹⁴

Boundaries similarly loom large in narrative, the superstitions noted earlier for example also manifesting themselves in medieval legends of demons appearing at the edge of the forest or on the boundary between communities.¹⁵ But they are even more significant of course in narratives of how boundaries were established or destroyed or how they were crossed in taleworthy fashion, with outsiders intruding within the boundaries or insiders venturing beyond them. The Middle Ages inherited from its Nordic, classical, or Judaeo-Christian antecedents both boundary-establishing myths like those of Gefion (Sjælland) and Elissar (Carthage),¹⁶ and boundary-destroying legends like Joshua and the walls of Jericho. Boundary-breaching incursions into the city, castle or farmstead from without are central to narrative traditions from Grendel forcing the door of Heorot in *Beowulf* to Robin Hood entering the gates of Nottingham, and in between the fabliau in which spatial penetration is as often as not accompanied

¹² Patricia Lysaght, “Bealtaine: Irish Maytime Customs and the Reaffirmation of Boundaries,” in *Boundaries and Thresholds*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson (Stroud: Thimble Press, 1993) 37-38 (hereafter: *Boundaries and Thresholds*).

¹³ Aaron Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joyce Howlett (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), ch. 11, “Semantics of the Medieval Community: ‘Farmstead’, ‘Land’, ‘World’,” esp. 209.

¹⁴ Nicholas Howe, “The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England: Inherited Invented Imagined,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, esp. 100-102 (quotation from 101).

¹⁵ Jeremy Harte, “Hell on Earth: Encountering Devils in the Medieval Landscape,” in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 177-195.

¹⁶ For analogous motifs in folklore see Reimund Kvideland, “Establishing Borders: the Narrative Potential of a Motif,” in *Boundaries and Thresholds*, 13-20.

by corporeal,¹⁷ while excursions from inside the boundary into the forest, desert or wilderness (what Northrop Frye¹⁸ would identify as the second, “Green World,” of Shakespearean comedy), *en route* to a status-transforming encounter with its denizens, are a major structuring feature of saints legends, romances, and wondertales.¹⁹

But we should not proceed further with an examination of narrative space before querying and sophisticating the concept of edge and boundary which has provided the basis for the discussion thus far. There is first the fundamental question of the less than universal validity of the landscape *image* invoked in speaking of edges and boundaries. While these may indeed loom large in the lives, mentality and narratives of settled societies based on agriculture, which would tend to see the landscape in terms of *enclosures*, they will be correspondingly less significant for pastoral, nomadic, or recently migratory cultures, or itinerant sub-cultures, which are more likely to see the landscape in terms of *avenues* facilitating travel and the movement of herds, living, in David Abulafia’s striking (and in the present context, alarming) formulation, in “A World without Edges.”²⁰ They would seem more likely to narrate tales of how avenues were blocked and journeys achieved nonetheless:²¹ migrations (from the Israelites in the desert to the wagon train of the classic western); pilgrimages; quests. Indeed Laura Howes has suggested that “many kinds of medieval narrative rely on movement through space as an organizational tool,” in so doing perhaps reflecting the medieval experience of walking from place to place, with the landscape seen largely from the perspective of the traveler.²²

¹⁷ For exploitation of the analogy between territorial and bodily penetration in folksong see Louise O. Vasari, “A Comparative Approach to European Folk Poetry and the Erotic Legend Motif,” *Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal* 1.4 (December 1999): §§ 4-14.

¹⁸ Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1965), 132-159.

¹⁹ For surveys of the significance of the wilderness in some major narrative genres see Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus Broceliande Arden* (Woodbridge: Brewer 1993); Robert Progue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); wondertales will be dealt with below.

²⁰ David Abulafia, “Preface,” in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 10.

²¹ These alternative constructions of the environment as represented by enclosures and avenues respectively transfer to the narrative treatment of space the valuable insights into the narrative treatment of the human body (with the container and articulated limbs as alternatives) in Guillemette Bolens, *La Logique du Corps Articulaire: Les articulations du corps humain dans la littérature occidentale* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000). I have explored the implications of both corporal and spatial alternatives in “Bodies and Environments in the Contemporary Legend: Articulation vs. Enclosure,” forthcoming in the journal *Contemporary Legend*.

²² Laura L. Howes, “Narrative Time and Literary Landscapes in Middle English Poetry,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, 192-207. The sense of space as enclosures with boundaries would also be qualified by the fact that medieval villages themselves sometimes moved the homesteads rebuilt on a neighbouring site. See Grenville Astill, “Rural Settlement: The Toft and the Croft,” (hereafter: Astill, “Rural Settlement”) in *The*

Even within a world conceived of as having edges and boundaries, their placing and significance are of course contingent upon focus: the location of the centre from whose perspective they are defined. Asa Mittman's recent book, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*, offers a fascinating exploration of how the Anglo-Saxons sought to come to terms with a world-view which put them at the edge alongside with, and dubiously distinguishable from, the monsters of the periphery.²³

And here too, as in the case of Gurevich's inside and outside, it is possible to discern an analogy between cosmic and local perspectives. In a comparative study of the marginal lands of medieval England and Scandinavia which she interestingly characterizes as "a qualitative approach to space," Karin Altenberg has shown how a wilderness like Dartmoor, seen and treated as emphatically marginal by the administrative and ecclesiastic authorities, in terms of agricultural resources was conceived of in the customary regulations controlling grazing rights as a centre, with access to pasture steadily diminishing for communities situated towards, at and beyond *its* periphery: "the concept of 'marginality' is not inherent in an area but rather imposed on a region from outside," so that, just like medieval Scandinavia, "the 'marginality' of an area varies with the perspective adopted and with the level of social interaction and ..., as a result, a certain area can carry aspects of marginality and centrality at the same time."²⁴ Similarly in narrative, one tale's centre is another's periphery: while the knight may go *out* of the castle gate and set off into the green world, for the outlaw ballads the *Flurgrenze* is an edge to be crossed coming *in* from the other direction.

We should also appreciate that a boundary or an edge, in implying an inside and an outside, or a this side and a that side, is implicated in a binary opposition which needs to be deconstructed, and in more than fashionably theoretical terms. This applies particularly to any romantic notions we might have of the deep dark forest of fairytale beyond the castle wall or the edge of the village reflecting some vast, primeval "wild-wood" (as geographers call it) of medieval reality. Whatever the case in continental Europe, by the time of the Black Death woodland covered only about 6% of England: beyond the cultivated fields lay not so much a wilderness as "semi-natural vegetation, land managed and used but not cultivated: heath, fen, moor land, semi-natural grassland, woodland and wood pasture."²⁵ Rather than wild beasts and monsters, a west

Countryside of Medieval England, ed. Grenville Astill and Annie Grant (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988; repr. 1992), 39 (hereafter: Astill and Grant, *Countryside*).

²³ Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) (hereafter: Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*). The topic is pursued beyond the Anglo-Saxon period by Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000 - 1534* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁴ Altenberg, *Experiencing Landscapes*, 19; see p. 1 for qualitative vs. quantitative approaches; pp. 79-111 for Dartmoor.

²⁵ Oliver Rackham, "The Medieval Countryside of England: Botany and Archaeology," in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, 14-15.

European venturing into the forest would be more likely to meet hay-cutters, barkers, wood-choppers, charcoal burners, swineherds, nut-collectors, fruit-pickers, mushroom-collectors, firewood-gatherers, foresters, deer-hunters, poachers (in considerable numbers) and rather unromantic outlaws. Correspondingly, testing Levi-Straussian structuralism in relation to the castle-wilderness opposition in the *Yvain* of Chrétien de Troyes, Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Vidal-Naquet discerned a distinctly inhabited forest, and identified not so much two distinct realms with a boundary between them as a series of environmental gradations between culture and the wild, the appearance and behaviour of the protagonist shifting accordingly.²⁶

This too corresponds to the lived reality of rural life, medieval and later. While inhabiting a world in which the boundary was significant, medieval people would have been likely to see their world in terms of a *series* of boundaries, or graduated edges, registering several gradations between the near and the far. With many local variations, the farmhouse itself was located within a circumscribed toft, which also included outbuildings, yard and garden; this in turn was part of the croft – the toft, the arable fields (infield), orchards – fenced off from each other and from the pasturelands to which the toft had customary access (outfield), the latter themselves bounded say by wood- or marshland, and this last further divided by boundaries physical or customary, signalling the extent of rough pasture or access to other resources.²⁷ And in the opposite direction we might note for completeness sake that in many rural cultures a boundary within the farmhouse would divide from byre and stable the living quarters of the household, within which would be the private space of the chamber, and within that the bed, often a box-like structure or curtained alcove.

This view of the world as a complex of concentric boundaries is reflected, if from the perspective of the garden, in medieval art,²⁸ and also has a limited analogy in pageantry: the ceremonies welcoming a monarch as he entered the gate in a city wall were in many cases only one of a sequence, and not necessarily the first to involve crossing a boundary, as the approaching visitor may also have been intercepted at the boundary of the city's *jurisdiction*, often distinct from (and some way beyond) the physical boundary of wall and gate. In his moving evocation of the recent natural and cultural environment of rural Tuscany, Alessandro Falassi has traced a similar trajectory,

²⁶ Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Levi-Strauss en Brocéliande: esquisse pour une analyse d'un roman courtois," in *Claude Lévi-Strauss: Textes de et sur Claude Lévi-Strauss*, ed. R. Bellour & C. Clément (Paris: Gallimard, 1979) pp. 265-319 an extended version of the article originally published in *Critique* (June 1974): 541-571.

²⁷ Astill, "Rural Settlement: The Toft and the Croft," 45-47; Roland Bechmann, *Trees and Man: The Forest in the Middle Ages*, trans. Katharyn Dunham (New York: Paragon House 1990) pp. 49-50; Michael Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape: Landscape Archaeology and Local History* (London: Routledge 1985; repr. 1998), 104, fig. 59 and for infield/outfield 127-128.

²⁸ Bridget Ann Henisch, "Private Pleasures: Painted Gardens on the Manuscript Page," in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, 154-157.

as seen through the eyes of visitors approaching a farmhouse, through a series of boundaries from the forest to the hearthstone in the kitchen, and has also noted the traditional decorum with which different segments between the boundaries are associated with different gender or age-groups: boys in the forest (herding animals); men in the fields (ploughing and harvesting); women in the garden and house.²⁹ There is an interesting echo of this decorum in the high culture of Renaissance pageantry. When Queen Elizabeth was lavishly entertained by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth in 1575, the respective zones delineated by such boundaries (here those appropriate to a stately home) provided the stages for entertainments of appropriate cultural character: rustic comedy in the garden; Ovidian pastoral in the park; romance of chivalry in the forest.³⁰

These multiple, concentric boundaries necessarily complicate our notion of medieval edges and their significance, as does the related phenomenon, the tendency to consider a boundary as a *space* rather than a line. There were less likely to be conflicts between neighbouring communities when Death or Winter could be expelled, not *across* the boundary, but *into* a boundary in the form of a river. Medieval kingdoms, principalities and dukedoms, even when their geographical relationship was stable, tended to be separated by “marches” (like England’s with Wales and Scotland, not to mention Denmark), rather than the modern-period’s linear frontiers with border-posts.³¹ Even walled cities, from perspectives other than physical access, had “broad” edges encompassing a ditch as well as a wall, plus the peripheral segments of the area encompassed by this physical boundary, and the suburbs immediately outside it.³² In a modern context the realm is invoked in the sad song from Bruce Springsteen, whose title I invoke in mine, as the place “out at the Trestles”; “neath Abram’s Bridge” where a young man wastes his time with other losers, bitter at the girl who has left him for a man who could give her “a house up in Fairview”.³³ For the Middle Ages the reality and artistic representa-

²⁹ Alessandro Falassi, *Folklore by the Fireside: text and Context of the Tuscan Veglia* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1980), ch. 1: “The World by the Fireplace.”

³⁰ Bruce R. Smith, “Landscape with Figures: The Three Realms of Queen Elizabeth’s Country- House Revels,” *RenD*. NS. 8 (1977): 57-115.

³¹ Abulafia ed., *Medieval Frontiers*, xii-xiii.

³² What seem to be ambiguities in Keith Lilley’s discussion in his *Urban Life in the Middle Ages* of the localization of “marginal groups” (pp. 244-246) as to whether they are inside or outside the city walls may stem from this broadness of the medieval concept of the edge. See also Keith Lilley, “Mapping cosmopolis: Moral topographies of the medieval city,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22 (2004): 681-698 and Bronislaw Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 86: criminal groups tended to form in places in Paris which were “distinguished by their marked lack of social organisation,” and “such places were located on the edge of the town.”

³³ I have consulted the text at <http://www.brucespringsteen.net/songs/DarknessOntheEdgeOfTown.html>.

tion of the broad urban boundary have been explored in the brilliant work of Michael Camille,³⁴ so that it will be sufficient here with a modest supplement, a corner from a sixteenth-century plan of the town of Hull (fig. 1), which depicts, between the houses and the wall, a row of garden plots which seem to follow the wall for a good part of its circumference.

Here the *Flurgrenze*, at least in one of its meanings, is *inside* the wall, but there is no evidence of those gardens ever having existed in medieval Hull: the sketch is witness to the strength of the feeling that there *ought* to be this broad, graduated edge to the town.³⁵ But even a medieval city wall, as visitors to Tallinn can observe at first hand, has a certain breadth, and constitutes a space which can be utilized or inhabited. Gateways in particular provided usable upper stories: the poet Geoffrey Chaucer lived above Aldgate in London in the late fourteenth century, and the medieval church of St Swithun's-upon-Kingsgate still survives in Winchester. And what is true of walls applies equally to boundary ditches, which could be up to four yards wide, and castle moats, up to thirty yards.³⁶

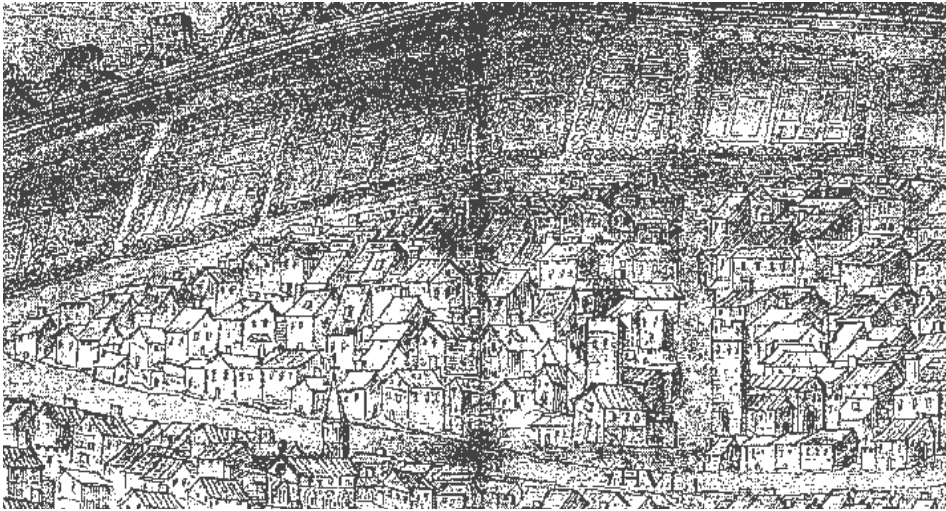


Fig. 1: The plan of Hull

And for the third time we may make an analogy between local boundaries and the edges of the world: the monstrous races – typically hybrids of man and beast – which the *mappae mundi* place at the periphery still remain within the world's boundary,

³⁴ Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

³⁵ London. British Library, MS Cotton Augustus I.i f. 83 pr. Landsberg, *Medieval Garden*, 33.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 63.

while conversely, in an extraordinary twelfth-century Computus manuscript invoked in Asa Mittman's *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*, Hibernia and Thule are actually outside the world's boundary, but the latter is broad, itself encompassed by two concentric lines (rather like the edge of a coin or seal³⁷) with Britain, and the accordingly monstrous Britons, between them: not so much on the edge as in it.³⁸ This manuscript's placing of Hibernia and Thule actually beyond the edge of the world may resolve a question raised in discussion at the workshop, on the relationship between "edge" and boundary: even on the ultimate, cosmological, level it would seem (as inevitably on others) an edge is also a boundary: there was always something else on the other side. Meanwhile the compatibility between the interstitial space within the edge and the monstrous, hybrid creatures which inhabit it, is of course reproduced in the margins of medieval manuscripts and on the edges of medieval buildings – witness again the work of Michael Camille³⁹ – and also features in narrative genres, from the hybrids (like the Centaur, Scylla, Chimaera, and Harpy) stabled on the threshold of hell in Book VI of the *Aeneid*,⁴⁰ to the maniac with the hook, the hairy-armed hitchhiker and the monster with iron teeth on the edge of town in modern, urban legends.⁴¹

Thus encouraged, informed, and, not least, thus warned, we my glance briefly at the treatment of edges and boundaries in three narrative corpora, representing medieval literary narrative (Boccaccio's *Decameron*) and traditional, folk narrative in sung and spoken modes: respectively Danish ballads and the wondertales (*Zaubermärchen*) among the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* of the brothers Grimm.⁴² And there do seem to be significant differences. In Boccaccio's sophisticated novelle, boundaries and edges are invariably urban, and sporadic in their incidence: individual instances can accordingly be quite striking, and can in particular take the form of edges having space within them which participates in significant narrative action. In the Danish folk ballads, most of which are recorded in manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (but probably with

³⁷ Conveniently illustrated here among Aleks Pluskowski's material in this volume by the seal of John de Warenne (see p. xx of this volume).

³⁸ Oxford St John's College Library 17 f. 6r reproduced in Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, 19, fig. 1.4. It can also be consulted at <http://www.henry-davis.com/MAPS/EMwebpages/205BB.html>.

³⁹ Camille, *Image on the Edge* and "Play Piety and Perversity in Medieval Marginal Manuscript Illumination," in *Mein Ganzer Körper ist Gesicht: Grotteske Darstellung in der europäischen Kunst und Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Katrin Kröll and Hugo Steger (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1994) pp. 171-92.

⁴⁰ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W.F. Jackson Knight, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956; repr. 1973) pp. 155-6.

⁴¹ Tom Pettitt, "The Ambivalent Beast in the Liminal Landscape: Cultural and Historical Perspectives on the Contemporary Legend," *ARV: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 60 (2004): 29-60.

⁴² Insofar as the boundaries concerned are in most cases between the castle, cottage or city and the countryside (typically the forest) the following represents a tentative and somewhat empirical incursion of Ecocriticism into the fields of medieval and traditional narrative; for the philosophy of this approach see *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

medieval traditions behind them), boundaries and edges are invariably rural, their occurrence regular: a systemic part of the narrative world and narrative structure of the ballads. And the boundary is broad, taking the form of a transitional realm between society and the wilderness: the rose-grove (*rosenlund*) which is neither garden nor wildwood.⁴³ In the fairytales published by the Brothers Grimm (perhaps because of their mixture of folk and literary antecedents, or the literary editing to which they were subjected) there are signs of both systems: the Boccaccian boundary which is wide enough for things to happen in it; the balladic forest area which is more of a transitional zone than an authentic wilderness.⁴⁴

One tale in the *Decameron*,⁴⁵ indeed the first (Day 1 Tale 1), contains merely a reference, but an interesting one to a "broad" boundary. Fearing that a notoriously wicked man who is staying with them will die of an illness he has contracted, two Florentines anxiously speculate on what will happen to the corpse: "no church will want to accept his body and he'll be flung into the moat like a dog." The background is supplied by the Florentine chronicler Villani, to the effect that it was common practice for the bodies of suicides, heretics and excommunicates to be thrown into the moat surrounding the walls of the city.⁴⁶ Better qualified as what we might term an "edge-tale," another (Day 2 Tale 2) brings us literally inside the cavity of a city wall in the account of a merchant who is attacked by robbers in the countryside and left with only his shirt (fig. 2). Arriving at a city after the gates have been shut, he shelters by the city wall under a house which "juted out appreciably from the castle walls" and close to "a postern underneath the overhang." A woman in the house hears his moans through the wall, and lets him in through the postern. She looks after him, and has sex with him. Somewhat appropriately for the denizen of this very liminal habitat, she has a rather ambiguous status: the mistress of a town aristocrat, who keeps her in this house for his pleasure. Next morning the merchant leaves by the postern and enters the city by the gate. An illustration to this tale in the first printed edition, of 1492, shows the merchant both

⁴³ Linear edges also make sporadic appearances for example with characters intercepted at "the castle gate" (*borgedel*).

⁴⁴ The discussion of the Grimms' tales which follows will supplement the few existing analyses of space in folk narrative including two contributions to *Folklore on Two Continents: Essays in Honor of Linda Dégh*, ed. Nikolai Burlakoff and Carl Lindahl (Bloomington: Trickster Press, 1980): W.F.H. Nicolaisen's "Space in Folk Narrative" (pp. 14-18: on ten arbitrarily collected folktales) and Elizabeth Tucker's "Concepts of Space in Children's Narratives" (pp. 19-25: on the stories exchanged among pre-adolescent girls). Both studies note the importance of graduated boundaries. Nicolaisen returns to the topic in "The Past as Place: Names Stories and the Remembered Self," *Folklore* 102 (1991): 3-15.

⁴⁵ References will be to Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G.H. McWilliam, 2nd ed., Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1995) specifying tales by day and number; I have checked the texts against the original Italian text, Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. V. Branca (Florence: Le Monnier, 1980; 3rd ed. 1987).

⁴⁶ *The Decameron*, trans. McWilliam, 806 n. 3.

sleeping outside the postern and taking a bath in the house, with some attempt to depict the house as part of the city wall.⁴⁷

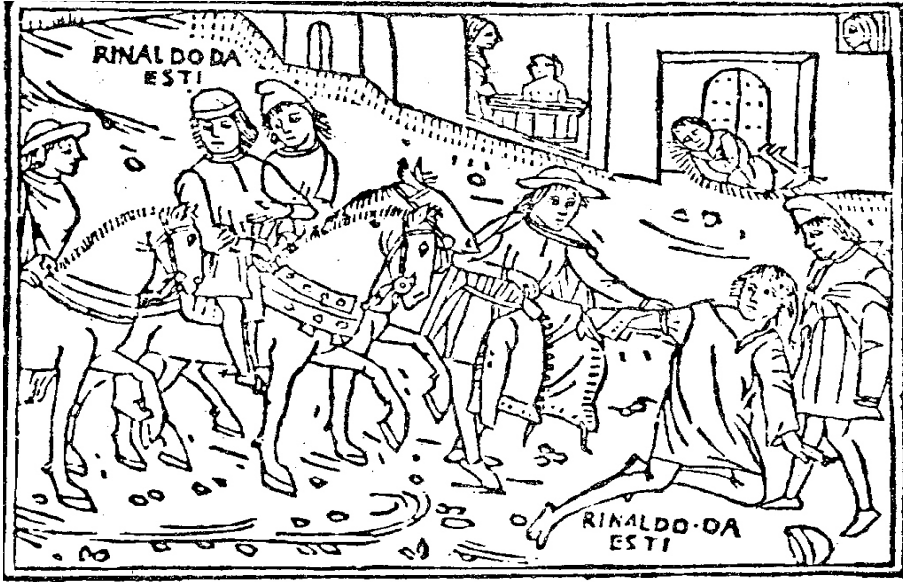


Fig. 2: The merchant left only with his shirt

Perhaps the most satisfactory liminal space in the Decameron is that of Day 8 Tale 9, a sewage ditch which leads ordure from what is effectively a public toilet on the edge of Florence, across its *Flurgrenze*, and into the fields, where it is used as manure. It too acquires an appropriately ambivalent inhabitant in the form of a doctor who is ejected into it as a jape by two tricksters vexed by his pride: he is wearing a pretentious coat made of *vair* (squirrel fur), so that he “looked like the ass that he was,” and as part of the elaborate subterfuge he is brought to the ditch on the back of a figure wearing a horned carnival devil's mask and a black bearskin.⁴⁸

To complete the picture Boccaccio also offers us a broad *Flurgrenz* on the vertical plane, in the form of a cavern which is underneath a house (*una grotta cavata nel*

⁴⁷ Reproduced in Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Branca, pl. VIII between pp. 128 and 129.

⁴⁸ Here too there is an early illustration (*Decameron*, ed. Branca, pl. XXXVII on p. 970). The actual status of the ditches was made clear in early commentaries for which see *The Decameron*, ed. McWilliam, 856. Less striking events on or at boundaries include a monk who seduces a girl he meets when “taking a solitary stroll round the walls of the monastery” (Day 1 Tale 4), but she is just a local farmer's daughter, and the young man who visits a prostitute in the quarter of a city named *Malpertugio* (“Evil Hole”) – appropriately enough but actually from an aperture in the city wall providing ready access from the harbour, indicating we are on the edge of town.

monte), reached from within by a flight of steps, but also accessible from outside, Freudian-style, via a shaft whose entrance is hidden by brambles. Here the lady of the house meets her lover, and it is the latter who meets the decorum of the liminal space by acquiring an ambivalent appearance: precisely because of the need to force the brambles, he meets his lady dressed head to foot in a leather suit (Day 4 Tale 1).

The wondertales of the Grimms⁴⁹ also have sporadic examples of edge-tales in which adventures or decisive developments occur at or in relatively broad edges in relation to cities, houses or castles. The most familiar perhaps is the doorway which sheds gold on the good girl (and frogs and reptiles on the bad girl) returning from a sojourn serving Mother Holle in the otherworld, of which this doorway (at least on the return journey) is the threshold: “She took the maiden by the hand and led her to a large door. *When it was opened and the maiden was standing right beneath the door-way*, an enormous shower of gold came pouring down, and all the gold stuck to her so that she became completely covered with it” (No. 24, “Mother Holle,” emphasis supplied).⁵⁰

A related tale, “The Three Little Gnomes in the Forest” (No. 13), opens with an analogous story of good girl rewarded and bad girl punished: it does not deploy the return through the threshold in the manner of “Mother Holle,” but boundaries figure prominently in a sequel, in which the bad daughter usurps the place of the good (who has married a king). She is thrown out of the castle through a window into a river (effectively the castle moat), but is transformed into a duck, and makes her way back into the castle through the drain. Retaining the ability to speak, she is able to explain to her husband that he can disenchant her by swinging his sword over her head three times “on the threshold.”

This usurpation motif in turn provides the main action in the “The Goose Girl” (Tale 89), with a similar deployment of a boundary in the resolution. A beautiful princess on her way to be married to a prince has her place usurped by a wicked chambermaid, and the princess becomes a goose-girl in the employ of the royal household. Fearing it will betray her, the false princess has their faithful horse, Falada, killed, but:

... the true princess ... secretly promised the knacker a gold coin if he would render her a small service. There was a big dark gateway through which she had to pass every morning and evening with the geese, and she wanted him to nail

⁴⁹ References will be to *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. Jack Zipes, 2 vols. (New York: Bantam, 1987; repr. in pbk. 1988; revised ed. 1992), specifying tale number in this edition; Zipes’ texts are based on the 7th edition of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* from 1857 which is the culmination of the Grimms’ editorial interventions (on material largely gathered from people of their social acquaintance: there is no assumption in what follows that this are “authentic” folktales).

⁵⁰ That Mother Holle lives in an “otherworld” which is technically an “underworld,” reached on the outward (downward) journey via the shaft of a well is compatible with the studies of Nicolaisen and Tucker (see above n. 44) which both emphasize that folk narratives construct space on a vertical axis as often as on a horizontal one; among urban legends the phenomenon is illustrated by the rumours of alligators or other creatures infesting the sewers of major cities: see my “Ambivalent Beast” study above n. 41.

Falada's head on the wall under the dark gateway.... Early the next morning, when she...drove the geese out through the gateway, she said in passing: "Oh, poor Falada, I see you hanging there." Then the head answered: "Dear Queen, is that you really there?"

By this means her true identity is revealed and the wrong she has suffered is righted. The text published by the Grimms is not quite explicit, but the implication is clearly that the wicked chambermaid had spared the princess's life on condition that she promised not to reveal what had happened to a living soul, either in the court or out of it: hence the astutely selected liminal environment supplied by the broad edge constituted by the gateway.

Otherwise, as we might expect, boundaries are most often related to the wilderness (typically a forest) which looms large in about two thirds (55 of 77) of those Grimms' *Märchen* which qualify as wonder tales – but in various ways.⁵¹ In some cases – almost exclusively associated with female protagonists (or with male-female pairs, like Hansel & Gretel) – the wilderness seems to stand in opposition to the village or castle, in which case there is a boundary *between* them, which in a few cases is sufficiently broad for significant events to occur in it, for example in "The Pink Flower" (No. 76), in which the decisive event occurs in an "animal park" (that is, where semi-wild animals are kept for hunting, like the ballad rose-grove) which forms a broad boundary between the palace and the forest, and a place of encounters between people from the palace (a queen and her child) and wild beasts from the forest (who are believed to have eaten the child). The deer-park here can also be seen as part of a graduated boundary between palace and forest which also comprises the royal garden.⁵²

In such cases, the typical spatial aspect of the tale is movement across (or through) the boundary from the community into the wilderness, and in due course back again.⁵³ But just as frequent as these "excursion tales" however, and clearly as part of a systemic spatial structure for both male and female protagonists, are the "traverse tales" in which the forest *itself* seems to form a broad boundary, between two households or societies: that of the protagonists and their *old* families (comprising their parents and possibly siblings) where they belong at the beginning of the tale (when they are imma-

⁵¹ I have not sought to correlate the following with the interesting perceptions on a rather different plane in Alfred Messerli, "Spatial Representation in European Popular Fairy Tales," *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 19 (2005): 274-284.

⁵² In a version of "Snow White" collected from Corsica in 1959 the coffin of the dead-and-alive heroine is placed on an altar quite explicitly "à l'entrée de la forêt"; *Le Conte populaire français: Catalogue raisonné des versions de France et des pays de langue française d'outre-mer*, ed. Paul Delarue and Marie-Louise Tenèze, 4 vols. (vols. 1-2: Paris: Erasmé, 1957; vols 3-4: Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1985), vol. II, 656.

⁵³ As noted in Nicolaisen's "The Past as Place". Joyce Thomas, *Inside the Wolf's Belly: Aspects of the Fairytale* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 175-76 speaks of the forest itself as "an appropriate threshold to magic and the supernatural": the logic is not clear as the latter should therefore be on the other side of the forest (but perhaps on a vertical axis they are).

ture, single and vulnerable), and that of the protagonists and their *new* families (comprising their spouse and possibly children) at the end of the tale (when they are mature, married and established).⁵⁴ As such, the forest provides the liminal setting for the adventures, typically with highly ambivalent creatures, which bring them from the one situation to the other: “Snow White” is the classic instance with a female protagonist, “Strong Hans” with a male protagonist.⁵⁵ And the pattern is subject to change. In “Snow White” as the Grimms received it from tradition (as surviving in the Brentano Manuscript), the apparently dead heroine is found in her glass coffin by her father, who duly takes her home, and only later finds a prince for her; in the form they published, it is the prince himself who finds her, and so takes her beyond the forest to his kingdom.⁵⁶ The Grimms’ Little Red Riding Hood is sent from her village to her grandmother’s cottage “in the forest” qualifying this as a tale where the boundary is between village and wilderness, but in the French antecedents from which the Grimms, ultimately, derive the story, the grandmother lives in another village on the other side of the forest, which therefore functions as a broad boundary between the two and in which significant events occur, although their significance, in this rather atypical wondertale, is hard to fathom.⁵⁷

Both of these functions – the environment *into* which the protagonist enters, or the environment *through* which the protagonist travels, and which sets the scene for decisive events – are fulfilled in the Danish ballads by the rose grove, the *rosenlund*, whose name probably signals its status and role as a broad threshold between the castle or farmstead and the wilder forest.⁵⁸ It is not altogether clear whether the *rosenlund* of

⁵⁴ This adds a spatial dimension to the structuralist analysis of wondertales by Bengt Holbek (whose terminology is also reflected here) in *Interpretation of Fairy Tales. Danish Folklore in a European perspective*, FFC 239 (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Sciences, 1987).

⁵⁵ On my reading there are 14 wondertales in the Grimms’ collection involving an excursion from a human community across (or through) the boundary into the wilderness 31 in which the wilderness is an extended boundary between two communities.

⁵⁶ For parallel texts see Heinz Rölleke, ed., *Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm* (Cologne-Genève: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1975), 244-59.

⁵⁷ The Grimms’ version (from their 7th ed.) is conveniently juxtaposed with the French semi-literary (Perrault) and traditional versions of this tale in Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: Norton, 1999), 10-16. The notion that this tale is indeed about growing up is sometimes asserted on the basis of the menstrual implications of the “red” hood, which however is singularly absent from the folk versions and seems to have invented by Perrault; it is more plausibly suggested (and from the perspective of social enculturation rather than physiological development) by the alternative roads of “pins” and “needles” which figure prominently in the traditional versions. See Robert Darnton, “Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose,” in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 9-72.

⁵⁸ References will be to *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, 12 vols., ed. Svend Grundtvig, Axel Olrik and Hakon Grüner-Nielsen *et al.* (Copenhagen: Universitets-Jubilæets Danske Samfund, 1853 -1976). Less frequent but common alternatives are “lime-grove” (*lidelund*) and “green grove” (*grønne lund*): the following is however based exclusively on the incidence and function of the rose-grove. English and Scottish traditions do

Danish *history* corresponded to the “little park” or “pleasure park” where ladies looked at the animals, or the “great park” where men hunted and killed them, or something in between; nor indeed is it clear exactly where and when this distinction was valid in medieval Europe.⁵⁹ Nor indeed is it certain that roses (wild or cultivated) in the modern botanical sense were involved: in some dialects of early Danish *rose* could mean simply flower, the species *rosa* distinguished as “thorny roses,” *tornerose* (as in the Danish title of “Sleeping Beauty”). But in the ballad-world, the *rosenlund* is repeatedly referred to as an environment for hunting and hawking, its fauna accordingly including deer, hares and birds (DgF nos. 34, 58, 180, 348, 475, 511), while eagles (330) and ravens (1; 96) are also mentioned in passing. Apart from one mention of oak and beech (66), its flora seems to have been dominated by the lime or linden-tree (e.g., 230, 284, 321, 440), also familiar from medieval love-lyric,⁶⁰ and still a favourite around Danish stately homes.

The rose-grove was a far from wild or desolate spot: in all the 500-plus Danish ballads only one figure gets lost in one, and he is under a dwarf-maiden’s spell (35). It is often explicitly located on the edge of community or homestead (34, 57, 58, 78, 180, 230, 284, 348, 405, 415A, 440, 470, 475, 503), indeed within earshot of the church bells (458), and just as often is passed through on the way from one residence to another (5, 46, 47, 54, 73, 82, 84, 85, 333, 416E, 417, 499, 501, 506, 519), and people in a given residence can hear (54) or even see (85; 303) what is happening there. In addition to hunting and hawking and travelling from one place to another, “normal” activities associated with rose-grove are recreational walking (57), dancing (503) and, above all: romantic or sexual dalliance: it is a place where lovers make assignments (8, 230, 284, 405, 470), and on a lucky day a huntsman may find, sheltering beneath a linden-tree, a hapless maiden whose lover didn’t show up (230).

As a hunting-ground the rose-grove’s ambient fauna includes hares (34, 475) and deer (34, 58, 180, 348), along with ravens (1, 96), eagles (330) and diverse other birds (475, 511). But appropriately for a liminal environment its denizens are as often ambivalent: humanoid but supernatural species such as dwarves (34; 35) and elves (36; 37), and above all human-animal hybrids: animals with human characteristics – the talking bird

not seem to have such a consistent terminology for their trysting-places: a near equivalent is certainly “the broomfield,” or “broomfield hill”: for an instance and discussion see David Atkinson, *The English Traditional Ballad: Theory Method and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 146-180, and 154 for “greenwood”.

⁵⁹ See for example Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden*, 13 and 21-25; Paul Stamper, “Woods and Parks,” in Astill & Grant, *Countryside*, ch. 7, esp. 140-145, “Parks and Hunting;” Oliver Rackham, “The Medieval Countryside of England: Botany and Archaeology,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes*, 22-23. No parks so-named survive today or occur on Danish estate-maps of the last couple of centuries: *Rosenlund* is however very common in modern Denmark as a name for farms or suburban villas.

⁶⁰ A.T. Hatto, “The Lime-Tree in Early German Goliard and English Lyric Poetry,” *MLR* 49 (1954): 193-209. Shakespeare’s *Tempest* has a “line grove” adjacent to Prospero’s cell in which his appropriately liminal enemies (Caliban, a jester and a drunkard) are intercepted as they approach to attack.

(506) or wolf (54); humans transformed into animals – eagle (12), werewolf 57), falcon (56), deer (58), tree (66 – linden of course).

Above all, the rose-grove provides the stage for the decisive events in the ballad narrative, typically the encounters between protagonists and antagonists which set a critical sequence of events in train or bring them to a climax.⁶¹ It is in the rose-grove that transformed humans are disenchanted (12, 56, 57, 66), that feuds conclude in violence (30, 164, 195, 321), that a husband kills his wife's lover, or vice-versa (348; 296), that lovers plan to meet (230, 440, 470), that eloping lovers are caught up with by pursuing families (82), that a man is intercepted and attacked by his sweetheart's brothers (303, 415, 416, 417 – the upshot varies), that women are courted or seduced (220, 230, 308, 415, 416, 440, 503), raped (312), and/or murdered (311, 438 – by her brother), that seduced women give birth to bastard children and kill them (529) or themselves die (54, 270, 271). The whole is best summed up by the ballad which Danish folksong scholarship, in its down to earth way, has named "Fornication and Murder" (348. *Hor og Mord*), and which concludes with a scene in the rose-grove where a lady, as many do, and as she probably has many times before, kisses her lover; only it is now her lover's corpse, killed there by her husband, this in turn the result of a fateful encounter in the rose-grove where the lover had taunted the cuckold. The wife, sharing the latter's sense of environmental decorum, will die in the rose-grove by her lover's side, in some versions, Juliet-like, using his sword.⁶²

The *rosenlund* is an edgy sort of place where ballad people go through major transitional experiences, often in the company of ambivalent creatures: Perhaps the quintessential boundary of traditional narrative, and a reminder that edges are not so much lines where things end, but areas where things happen.

⁶¹ Against this background I must emphatically disagree with Otto Holzapfel's assertion, *Det balladeske: Fortællemanden i den ældre episke folkevis* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1980), 75 (my translation) that "the rose-grove as a disquieting place which can be encountered in other contexts is actually unknown in the ballad."

⁶² He has in the mean time raped her to re-establish his conjugal rights and she has killed him and their seven children.

THE MARGINS OF ONE'S SMALL WORLD: THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWNS
IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Judit Sebő

Depictions of the outskirts of towns and the countryside in the visual arts embody another sort of “edge” amongst the many kinds discussed in this volume. The notion that I apply indicates that the viewpoint is the one of townspeople. The images show areas which are out of an urban centre – districts further away from the administrative, commercial, and major spiritual institutions of the town. Places of production, the dwellings of simple people, areas for recreation and – in certain cases – for public punishment are shown instead. These scenes bring one to the extreme margin of an inhabited area or the zone where town and countryside meet and merge together.

Since it is a matter of decision what to encapsulate in an image, these representations can tell not only about the historical reality of the selected subjects but – because the motifs were consciously chosen by the artist – also about the demands and the taste of the audience. In this paper I do not intend to identify anonymous settlements and relate their images to this or that category. My scope will be restricted to the origins of the theme of “edges” and the distinction among different types.

MARGINALITY AS SUBJECT MATTER

So far, it may rightly seem uncertain to which works the label of “outskirts” can be applied. Another question following from this is to what degree this theme is equal to a specific genre. Concerning Dutch art, the concept of rural landscape – a genre emerging as such in the early 1600s – is well known, and its national antecedents from the 1530s have been extensively studied and are fairly well understood.¹ In my opinion, however, this phenomenon – views from the Flemish and Dutch countryside in paintings, draw-

¹ Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places. The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruysdael* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Catherine Levesque, *Journey through Landscape in Seventeenth-Century Holland: The Haarlem Print Series and Dutch Identity* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

ings and prints – does not completely cover the possibilities and variations of town outskirts in art.

On the one hand, South German artists of the early sixteenth century contributed to this theme in their own tone. On the other hand, views of a somewhat more urban character can also be identified in Netherlandish art around 1600. Here I think of drawings which bring the beholder to the outer fringes of the city, where the town is depicted from the backyards, so to speak, looking towards the centre from the suburbs. This approach required a solid foundation, a long tradition of town depictions, which allowed artists to deviate from the established scheme, to move both standpoint and focus.

Is it valid at all to talk about images of towns that have some “edges,” something of marginality in their character? Frankly speaking: no, at least not in the Middle Ages. The method of placing the periphery into the focus of a representation belongs to the tendency of the period just succeeding the Middle Ages. True, this kind of relation to the natural environment and the human share in it, approaching them beyond the usual limits and thus evoking an intimate atmosphere, is not explicitly medieval. Attention to men’s world along with their buildings and activities is, however, rooted in the late Middle Ages, when the landscape already came to be represented in different contexts.

The landscapes and townscape of the subsequent decades in the early sixteenth century, including all those which can hardly be delegated to either of these genres – providing exactly the subject matter of this paper – grew out of these concealed mirrors of the universe.² Usually visible in the background of fifteenth-century panel paintings as spaces for narrative scenes, these earlier landscapes often display houses and castles painted accurately, meant to suggest a true framework for the story.³ Already then one may encounter motifs which later appeared individually, represented in their own right. Without these precedents, which were presumably based on observations also recorded in sketches, views focused on details would not have been possible to develop.

Thus, the drawings and prints discussed here originated mostly in the sixteenth century. They made use of old patterns while also going beyond them. Some artists around 1500 decidedly directed their sights towards humble neighborhoods embedded

² Here I allude to the genre of *Weltlandschaft*, “world landscape,” a somewhat later development. The term has usually been applied to early sixteenth-century paintings by Joachim Patinier and his contemporaries, in which the endless forms and phenomena of the world are assembled. See Detlef Zinke, *Patinirs “Weltlandschaft.” Studien und Materialien zur Landschaftsmalerei im 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977); Walter S. Gibson, “Mirror of the Earth”: *The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

³ Trustworthy portraits are known from as early as the 1470s, like that of Vienna in the background of the altarpiece by the so-called Schottenmeister; see Arthur Saliger, *Der Wiener Schottenmeister* (Munich: Prestel, 2005). Lübeck was also depicted in the former main altarpiece of the St. Nicholas church (Niguliste) in Tallinn, painted by Hermen Rode in 1478–1481.

in nature rather than striving to represent them in coherence with the whole landscape. Otherwise subordinate, trivial, and simple themes gained importance and were, so to speak, extolled through the attention paid to them for the sake of depiction. From this development, recognizable in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands – three variations of the taste for rural views – here I will only look at art from the northern side of the Alps.⁴

To treat German and Netherlandish features as alike would be, however, misleading. Although there were common grounds and similar circumstances that promoted parallel developments in the two schools, the artists who shaped the landscape tradition of each area were active in different periods and led the genre in distinctly different directions.⁵ Concentrating more on German artistic production, I will write about two types of the occurrence of “marginal” motifs. Chronologically, this begins with several of Albrecht Dürer’s views of Nuremberg, offering examples of both types. To emphasize similarities and to create contrast I will then refer to drawings by Netherlandish artists active around 1600. I will continue with drawings and etchings from the sphere of the so-called Danube school, which opened a new chapter in the visual arts, initiating the genre of inhabited landscapes and small towns free of any narrative context.⁶

TOWNS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS – A FEW WORDS ON DEFINITIONS

Before turning to the selected works some concepts need to be considered. One unavoidably faces the problem of using terms which would otherwise deserve to be examined more attentively as regards the visual evidence. In the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period “town,” “outskirts,” and “countryside” all refer to things different from modern times, and images can easily be misinterpreted. Although even a rough survey of the settlement types which marked Germany and Central Europe would overload this contribution, it is certain that the entire countryside went through a thorough

⁴ In Italy during the early sixteenth century, landscapes were produced primarily in the circle of Venetian artists inspired by Titian, see Harold E. Wethey, “Titian’s Landscape Drawings”, in *Titian and His Drawings with Reference to Giorgione and Some Close Contemporaries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 41-55 and Robert C. Cafritz, “Netherlandish Reflections of the Venetian Landscape Tradition,” in *Places of Delight: The Pastoral Landscape*, exhibition catalog (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1988), 112-129.

⁵ Concerning similar circumstances, the vital importance of print publishers for both German and Netherlandish landscapists is worthy of note; see Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (London: Reaktion Books, 1993) for Germany, and Gibson, *Pleasant Places*, especially 1-26 for the northern and southern Netherlands.

⁶ Many of Dürer’s landscapes can be acknowledged as independent, but they did not exert an immediate impact on the evolution of the genre.

change after the High Middle Ages, becoming filled with thousands of villages by 1500.⁷ Towns were smaller in size and population, as is probably to be expected on the basis of their achievements and influence.⁸ Even the largest and most important cities of Augsburg and Nuremberg housed no more than about 30,000 inhabitants around 1500; smaller and the smallest towns, which today would count as insignificant hamlets or middling villages of only a few hundred or thousand people, were still self-respecting communities and indispensable nodes in the network of settlements.⁹ Consequently, the category of *Kleinstadt* was introduced into historiography in order to name a formerly unnoticed phenomenon.¹⁰

In sum, one should be aware of the diverse scale of former settlements, thus any of their representations also has to be looked at accordingly with a critical, and at the same time, fresh eye attentive to details. Modern measurements have to be reconsidered when landscapes are studied; they are crammed with depictions of small towns and villages. Whether they represent definite localities cannot be judged in most cases, but this is not always necessary. In general, it is enough to know that they depict long-ago circumstances. In contrast, one might recall the *Wire-Drawing Mill* and the *Water Mills on the Pegnitz*, two gouache paintings by Dürer. Without knowing that they were made during or after a visit to an identifiable spot situated on the northwestern outskirts Nuremberg, they could be taken as non-topographical “landscapes.”¹¹ In this way, the analysis of the following works points to a visual history of the late medieval and early modern German countryside.

⁷ Thomas Robisheaux, “The Peasantries of Western Germany, 1300–1750,” in Tom Scott (ed.), *The Peasantries of Europe from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Longman, 1998), 110–142; Peter Blickle, “Reformation and Communal Spirit: The Reply of the Theologians to Constitutional Change in the Late Middle Ages,” in C. Scott Dixon (ed.), *The German Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), esp. 138–143.

⁸ Holger T. Gräf, “Small Towns in Early Modern Germany: The Case of Hesse,” in Peter Clark (ed.), *Small Towns in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 184–205 (hereafter: Gräf, “Small Towns”).

⁹ Concerning Augsburg, see Rolf Kießling and Peter Plaßmeyer, “Augsburg,” in Wolfgang Behringer and Bernd Roeck (eds.), *Das Bild der Stadt in der Neuzeit 1400 bis 1800* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999), 131–137; for Nuremberg, Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *Nuremberg. A Renaissance City, 1500–1618* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 3: 40,00 inhabitants in c. 1500; see also the chapter by Matthias Mende in Behringer and Roeck, *Das Bild der Stadt*, 334–339. On *Gemeinde* (communities) see Blickle, “Reformation and Communal Spirit.”

¹⁰ See Gräf, “Small Towns.”

¹¹ Albrecht Dürer, *Wire-Drawing Mill*, c. 1494, gouache, 286 x 422 mm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett; *Water-mills on the Pegnitz*, c. 1498/1506–1511?, gouache, 251 x 367 mm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes. A complete catalogue of Dürer’s drawings, including these gouaches, was compiled by Walter L. Strauss, *The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer*, 6 vols. (New York: Abaris Books, 1974–1977). For the most recent discussion and a good reproduction of the latter, see Matthias Mende’s entry in Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Maria Luise Sternath (eds.), *Albrecht Dürer*, exhibition catalog (Vienna: Albertina, 2003), no. 42.

Actually, there is no need to distinguish the genres of landscape and of townscape strictly: while land intermingled with town, the representation of an accurate topography yielded to a taste for the picturesque. Thus, the “edge” in townscapes does not mean a sharp line, a definite end of something, beyond which a completely different world begins. After all, the notion of an “edge” in the case of town depictions has an abstract sense as well, being on the borderland between townscapes and landscapes in the visual arts.

A TOWN ON THE HORIZON

Two rather loose and overlapping groups may be distinguished where the outskirts occur in the graphic arts: either in images showing places outside the town walls but still in close proximity, suggesting the presence of people nearby; or within the confines of the town, often describing streets and houses which are not in the best condition. The former can be observed in virtually every townscape, in both broad panoramas of cities and in views of less significant places where the outskirts are comprised in the complete image of the town. The latter, cityscape,¹² seems to be a type particular to the early 1600s, except for a few early examples.

Launched on a large scale by the woodcut illustrations of Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle*, the tradition of the town “profile” flourished all through the sixteenth century and even much later.¹³ As soon as its potential was recognized, an important turn towards more authentic and impressive representations took place; a large number of town depictions were produced, both on individual sheets and in series – different formats intended for different purposes.¹⁴ The town was represented as an entity which encompassed fields, waters and woods encircling its inhabited urban territory. If the depictions are rich enough in detail – and usually they are – the observer can discern buildings, gardens and other features characteristic of the countryside. This enables one to identify the most important elements in the environs of a town: gardens

¹² For the use of this term see Richard J. Wattenmaker in the Introduction of *The Dutch Cityscape in the 17th Century and Its Sources* (exhibition catalogue) (Amsterdam: Amsterdams Historisch Museum, and Ontario: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1977), 17.

¹³ The Schedel chronicle is often mentioned for different aspects. One of its novelties was the town series in a formerly unattested richness, representing in part authentic and in part imaginary places. Outskirts are not missing from most of them. Elisabeth Rücker, *Die Schedelsche Weltchronik. Das größte Buchunternehmen der Dürer-Zeit. Mit einem Katalog der Städteansichten* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1973).

¹⁴ For a summary of the editions with printed townscapes see Friedrich Bachmann, *Die alten Städtebilder. Ein Verzeichnis der graphischen Ortsansichten von Schedel bis Merian* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1939). More recently see Wolfgang Behringer, “Die großen Städtebücher und ihre Voraussetzungen,” in Behringer and Roock, *Das Bild der Stadt*, 81-93.

and vineyards, shooting ranges, bridges, mills, barns, and wayside shrines.¹⁵ It is undeniable that this approach has close connections with landscapes; only the perspective is changed.

The buildings and structures that were usual around towns had a practical role: flour was ground or wood was sawed at watermills and bridges spanned the waters that encircled the settlement. Interestingly, these motifs grew independent with the sixteenth century, to figure, probably without any further function but for their own sake, in drawings or prints. Their novelty is that the beauty of man-made constructions was recognized in them. The unbound use of such familiar motifs opened the way between real and imaginary townscapes, where small huts could be placed beside fortifications. However, this does not mean that these latter only depict idealized towns – the appeal of remoteness and decay may also be recognized in many of them. Not so in the drawings of Dürer; in the case of his water mills it is their fabric at its worst that may at first suggest an atmosphere of perishability, since every single lath and shingle is rendered precisely. Otherwise everything is in order and no moral teaching needs to be sought in the depiction of the mills.

The idea that the modern genre of topographical – or rather chorographical – landscape was born out of travel and walking seems to be correct. Dürer, as his drawings indicate, regularly strolled around his hometown. Not far from the water-mills he also recorded St. John's chapel and graveyard.¹⁶ This drawing can also be accepted as a faithful portrait of the site, located on what at that time was the edge of the city. There is no visible connection to the town, which is somewhere behind the viewer; the place seems to be isolated from it. It is rather in the surrounding hills where this closed garden is embedded.

During his walks, however, Dürer also cast a glance over Nuremberg from a certain distance, which resulted in a view completely different from those previously mentioned and also diverged from the established manner of town profiles.¹⁷ This is an alternative image of the city, seen from a shifted viewing angle; the walls and fortifications dominate the foreground, following the relief of the hilly terrain and accompanied

¹⁵ For a survey of suburban constructions in reality see Hartmut Boockmann, *Die Stadt im späten Mittelalter* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), especially the first chapter "Die Stadt vor der Mauer."

¹⁶ Albrecht Dürer, *The Chapel and Cemetery of St. John in the Outskirts of Nuremberg*, c. 1494, watercolors and gouache, 290 x 423 mm, formerly Bremen, Kunsthalle, but at an unknown location since 1945. On the identification of the spot see Hermann Leber, *Albrecht Dürers Landschaftsaquarelle. Topographie und Genese* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1988), esp. 109-112. For a more specialized study see Jan Simane, "Die Welt im Bild – Städte- und Landschaftsdarstellungen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," in Behringer and Roeck, *Das Bild der Stadt*, 56-65; and Kristina Herrmann-Fiore, "Dürers neue Kunst der Landschaftsaquarelle," in Schröder and Sternath, *Albrecht Dürer*, 27-43.

¹⁷ Albrecht Dürer, *Nuremberg from the West*, gouache, c. 1495/96–1506?, 163 x 344 mm, formerly Bremen, Kunsthalle, but at an unknown location since 1945; Strauss, *The Complete Drawings*, 1496/1.

by trees and small houses. The more important buildings appear in the background, a bit indistinct due to distance.

This townscape suggests a sense of organic unity between nature and constructions. Dürer's minute and faithful recordings have evident historical value. They depict the city as the inhabitants would have experienced it and they also document the walks the artist took in and around the town of his birth, places well known to him like the bridge at the Haller Gate or Saint John's graveyard, which later received his body as well.¹⁸ On the other hand, they display his predisposition for the picturesque and his perfect sense of composition.

A similar kind of approach recurred at the turn of the seventeenth century and found genuine articulation in the oeuvre of certain Netherlandish artists. Some of them, like Pieter Stevens, Roelandt Savery, Paulus van Vianen, and Jacob Savery the Elder were active for some time at the court in Prague.¹⁹ Thus, on their walks during their leisure time this town provided them with impressions to collect and motifs to record. This activity resulted in a novel type of cityscape which Stevens and Savery especially bequeathed to posterity. Regarding the outskirts, Roelandt Savery's drawings of ramshackle houses with pitched roofs standing in narrow streets in the less frequented parts of the city may be cited particularly.²⁰

FAR AND NEAR – THREE EXAMPLES OF TOWN PROFILES AND DETAILS

The "morphology" of suburbs can be studied in a whole series of land-and-townscapes executed by an artist in the service of Count Palatine Ottheinrich of Neuburg on the Danube around 1537.²¹ These drawings, presumably completed after arriving home, record the stations of a journey taken by the count during the winter of 1536–1537 in the region including parts of modern Germany, Poland, and Bohemia.²² In the image of

¹⁸ Albrecht Dürer, *Covered Bridge at the Haller Gate* (Trockensteg am Hallertor), c. 1496, ink and watercolours, Albertina, Vienna, inv. 3065, Schröder and Sternath, *Albrecht Dürer*, cat. no. 34.

¹⁹ On the drawings of the city of Prague by these artists, see Teréz Gerszi, "Landscapes and City Views of Prague," in Eliška Fučíková and others (eds.), *Rudolf II and Prague. The Court and the City*, exhibition catalog (Prague, 1997), 130–145, with further bibliography.

²⁰ For detailed descriptions, see Joaneath Ann Spicer-Durham, "The Drawings of Roelandt Savery" (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1979, photocopy, Ann Arbor: UMI, 1990). See also a drawing of timbered houses built into a wall on a slope, Christie's Amsterdam 13 November 1995, lot 82, black chalk, grey ink with washes, 176 x 275 mm. As the author of the catalogue entry notes, this scenery might be reminiscent of the memories of German and Bohemian towns which Savery had visited on his travels.

²¹ Angelika Marsch, Josef H. Biller and Frank-Dietrich Jacob, *Die Reisebilder Pfalzgraf Ottheinrichs aus den Jahren von seinem Ritt von Neuburg a. d. Donau über Prag nach Krakau und zurück über Breslau, Berlin, Wittenberg und Leipzig nach Neuburg* (Bild- und Textteil) (Weishorn: Konrad, 2001).

²² The drawings were first outlined in chalk or leadpoint and then finished with water- and bodycolours, Marsch, Biller and Jacob, *Die Reisebilder*, 26–28.

Breslau/Wrocław, for example, the center of the foreground is occupied by a cultivated field; further in the background gardens and small houses are visible behind fences, while in the left foreground a tremendous gallows is standing, heavily burdened with hanging corpses.²³ This is one of the significant marks in the zone belonging to towns with the right of jurisdiction. With the horrific sight of the decaying bodies of criminals, the gallows, rising in an open field, communicated the righteous power of the city and suggested security throughout the territory. An additional allusion to Jerusalem cannot be excluded either.

In one of Hanns Lautensack's seven pen drawings of different landscapes in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, the crucifixion is evoked by three simple crosses near a wooden shack, at the foot of a stone bridge leading to a marvelous city (fig. 1).²⁴ This cottage suits the ambience of the outskirts and stands in contrast to the mighty town across the river. The other six views are placed in more natural settings, most of them composed with a conspicuous central motif like a wooden bridge, high-arched stone bridge or roadside shrine.



Fig. 1: A city of Hanns Lautensack

²³ *Die Reisebilder* (Bildteil), no. 31. The wheels around the gallows were also employed to display the bodies; see Gibson, *Pleasant Places*, 103.

²⁴ Pen and black ink on grey grounded paper, 202 x 153 mm, signed with a monogram, dated 1550, inv. no. 224. There are three sheets with drawings on both recto and verso and one with a drawing only on one side.

Staying with motifs selected from the larger area of a town – constructions in the cultural landscape – a curious series of eighty-one etched roundels with different views may be cited.²⁵ Grouped seven by seven in the edition according to their main themes (with a last group of four), the origin and function of these unparalleled scenes remains unknown, just as the identity of the author and thus the time of creation. Among the motifs there are details of fortified cities, views of towns with huge city gates, fields by a gate with a maypole, castles, farms with carts, vineyards, ponds with ducks, a quarry, mills and a gallows – that is, confined and “marginal” both in scope and focus. Several aspects of these minute etchings raise queries. This variety of depictions, which far exceeds the usual choice of motifs, supplements the sometimes odd cuts of the composition; the numbering inside the etchings, from 1 to 51, also makes one wonder. In the light of other rural landscapes and townscape the presence of people at work also contradicts the idea that these scenes were produced as they are today. For the time being I can only presume that the scenes were copied from larger, detailed townscape which also contained surrounding land.

LANDSCAPE AND COUNTRYSIDE

As has already been established by contemporary authors, the landscape was “invented” during the first two decades of the 1500s and attributed to German artists, mostly those of the so-called Danube School: Albrecht Altdorfer and Wolf Huber in the first place and their followers: Augustin Hirschvogel, Hanns Lautensack, and others.²⁶ The landscape drawings and etchings of these artists, except for the wilderness views by Altdorfer, share the trait of being populated with a few or more houses scattered about in nature, in many cases suggesting a portrait of a real village or town.

In the Netherlands the rural landscape, initiated around mid-sixteenth century, became a kind of national specialty in the north, its greatest period falling in the seventeenth century.²⁷ Among its exemplars were the series of village and periphery views from the late 1550s by the so-called Master of the Small Landscapes, probably identical

²⁵ Vienna, Albertina. It is attributed with a question mark to Augustin Hirschvogel in *The Illustrated Bartsch*, nos. 44. 1–44. 81. I believe that the question mark is justified, since the style does not have much in common with Hirschvogel (mid-sixteenth century); it seems more probable that they come from the seventeenth century. Concerning further problems, see above.

²⁶ Hans Mielke, *Albrecht Altdorfer. Zeichnungen, Deckfarbenmalerei, Druckgraphik* (Berlin: Reimer, 1988); Franz Winzinger, *Wolf Huber. Das Gesamtwerk* 2 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1979); Karl Schwarz, *Augustin Hirschvogel* (Berlin: Bard, 1917); Annegrit Schmitt, *Hanns Lautensack* (Nuremberg: Selbstverlag des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg, 1957); Charles Talbot and Alan Schestack (ed.), *Prints and Drawings of the Danube School. An Exhibition of South German and Austrian Graphic Art of 1500 to 1560*, exhibition catalog (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

²⁷ The genre lasted much longer, well into the nineteenth century.

with Joos van Liere, which were then published several times.²⁸ These series were not the earliest which brought the beholders to the countryside, however; they were based on motifs already formulated in the 1520s and 1530s. Two Flemish sketchbooks are known from the following decade, one probably stemming from the workshop of Herri met de Bles which also recorded rural views in the vicinity of Antwerp to be used immediately in several variations in paintings.²⁹

These earliest Netherlandish images of the countryside bear characteristic features which distinguish them from their German contemporaries. Compared to their Netherlandish counterparts, where one recognizes more emphasis on the rendition of buildings and the equipment necessary for rural life, the Germans often composed views of natural surroundings with a significant number of buildings settled amongst abundant vegetation, often with castles on hilltops. To some extent the differences can be attributed to topographic reasons. While most of the Netherlandish rural landscapes are connected to the plains around Antwerp, Brussels, and later Haarlem, these German works echo the experience of the hilly Danube valley.³⁰

Almost no human beings are present in any of the German landscape drawings and etchings, while the Flemish-Dutch villages may display a couple of tiny puppet-like figures engaged in some activity. The close and descriptive image of one or a few buildings appears in the oeuvre of Wolf Huber, also including copies after his extant or lost compositions and drawings created in the same spirit. See, for example, the water-mill in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, portraying a place the artist presumably knew well or had passed by (fig. 2).³¹

²⁸ After serious efforts by several scholars to identify this master, it is still not certain whether he was Joos van Liere, Cornelis Cort or someone else. On this problematic question see, as one of the first contributors, Konrad Oberhuber, *Zwischen Renaissance und Barock. Das Zeitalter von Bruegel und Bellange*, exhibition catalog (Vienna: Albertina, 1968), nos. 27-32, p. 43-45; and recently Gibson, *Pleasant Places*, 1-14. The genre's production centre shifted from the southern to the northern Netherlands with Claesz Jansz Vischer.

²⁹ The so-called Errera Sketchbook and Antwerp Sketchbook. See Holm Bevers, "The Antwerp Sketchbook of the Bles Workshop in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett," in Norman E. Muller and others (ed.), *Herri met de Bles. Studies and Explorations of the World Landscape Tradition* (Princeton: The Art Museum, Princeton University Press, 1998), 39-48; Christopher S. Wood, "The Errera Sketchbook and the Landscape Drawing on Gounded Paper," *ibidem*, 101-116; Luc Serck, "L'Album Errera et le Recueil d'esquisses de Berlin dans leurs relations réciproques et leurs rapports avec Henri Bles," in Jacques Toussaint (ed.), *Actes du colloque "Autour de Henri Bles" 9-10 octobre 2000* (Namur: Société Archéologique de Namur, 2000): 95-118. See also Gibson, *Pleasant Places*, 13-14.

³⁰ The landscapes by Wolf Huber and his "heirs" are usually connected to the reach of the Danube between Passau and the Wachau.

³¹ Pen and brown ink, 145 x 148 mm, inv. 205; a few lines were probably emphasized later with darker ink. Winzinger, *Wolf Huber*, no. 25 and 25a (a copy in the former Koenigs Collection, Rotterdam); Katrin Achilles-Syndram, "Die Zeichnungssammlung des Nürnberger Kaufmanns Paulus II. Praun (1548-1616). Versuch einer Rekonstruktion," PhD Dissertation, microfiche edition (Berlin: Technical University, 1990), vol. 2: Die deutschen Zeichnungen, Z 362.

Both Huber's drawings and the landscapes following his example were inspired by nature. The question is whether the experience was always direct or sometimes secondary and how this inspiration was employed in the works. That Huber took a journey in the Alps with his sketchbook in hand has long been assumed on the basis of his oeuvre; in one set of drawings with huts in the forest all the copies after the lost originals attest to his readiness to draw on the spot.³² A number of settlements (including Urfahr, Feldkirch, and Passau) have also been identified in his drawings based on his personal chronology and topographical evidence. This means that there may have been further possibilities for identifying an anonymous landscape as the depiction of a definite site.

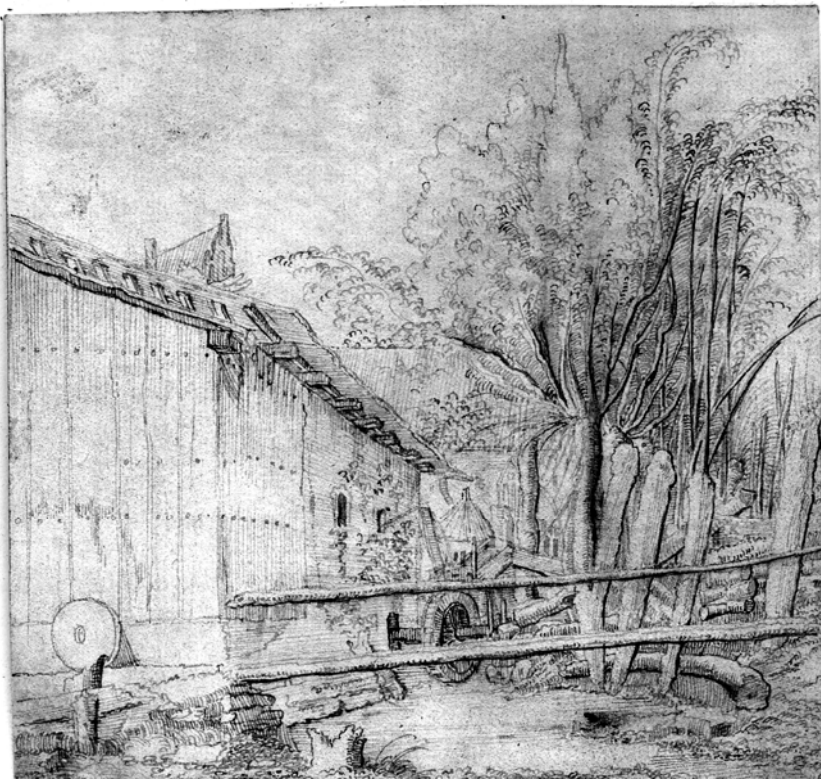


Fig. 2: Wolf Huber, Watermill

³² Peter Halm, "Die Landschaftszeichnungen des Wolfgang Huber," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, N. F. vol. 7 (1930): 1-104. For the Alpine huts and mills see Winzinger, *Wolf Huber*, no. 26 and its copies 26a-d; 168 and 168a; 169; 170 and 170a; 171 and two copies.

This happened with an image of a “Village Street” in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, which was recognized by Erwin Heinze as depicting the Schnecken- or Linzer Gate, built in 1493 in the suburb called Inn in Passau (fig. 3).³³ This suggests that the efforts to find whether the depicted landscapes represented real places or only intended to present beholders with a pleasant view is reasonable.



Fig. 3. Copy after Wolf Huber, The Schnecken or Linzer Gate in Passau

³³ Copy after Wolf Huber, *The Schnecken- or Linzer Gate in Passau*, after an original c. 1512/14, pen and brown ink, 151 x 141 mm, inv. 204. Erwin Heinze, “Wolf Huber und sein Kreis,” in *Die Kunst der Donauschule 1490-1540*, exhibition catalog (Linz: Amt der oberösterreichischen Landesregierung, 1965), 130, no. 320. Winzinger, *Wolf Huber*, no. 196; Achilles-Syndram, *Die Zeichnungssammlung*, Z. 367. One of the etchings of Hirschvogel (Bartsch 58) shows a gate quite similar to this one. Either he took over the motif in some way from Huber or he knew the place himself. It is also possible that the similarity is only due to the characteristic city-gate architecture of the period.

Looking at another copy after a lost drawing by Huber asserts the correctness of this idea (fig. 4): the bridge with the small cabin in the middle, the row of houses on the left and the fortifications rising on the right seem credibly authentic.³⁴ What renders this endeavor difficult is that the inhabited environment changed significantly in the course of the centuries and little towns and villages built on water may all have disappeared in this form. Nevertheless, systematic research into places and settlements on the basis of the landscapes by the Danube school artists could lead to a better identification of their travel routes.



Fig. 4: Copy after Wolf Huber: View of a small town

CONCLUSIONS

While at first even the existence of depictions of outskirts in Early Modern art appears to depend only on the viewpoint of the modern beholder, one can see that an attention paid to the margins can, indeed, be distinguished in drawings and prints from the turn of the sixteenth century on. This phenomenon occurred when focusing on details had

³⁴ Copy after Wolf Huber: *View of a Small Town (The Long Bridge)*, dated 1527, pen and brown ink, 153 x 205 mm, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, inv. 195. There is another copy in the collection, dated 1530 (inv. 197), and a third one in Kreuzenstein Castle (according to Winzinger).

been sufficiently prepared by observation, which also led to the creation of summarizing city views. Thus, turning towards the outskirts in representations seems to denote an end of the Middle Ages.

WHAT IS EXOTIC?
SOURCES OF ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS
FROM THE EDGES OF THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

Aleksander Pluskowski

INTRODUCTION

The polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) is the most impressive predator of the Arctic wastes; modern Europeans have become familiarised with these animals after centuries of polar exploration, their most intimate and violent behaviour has been captured on film, whilst their iconic associations range from confectionary to the accelerating degradation of the circumpolar environment.¹ Their distinctive appearance and exclusive distribution in an environment where human activity is severely restricted, has meant that polar bears are one of the few animals that remain virtually ‘exotic’ – foreign – at a global scale. This is despite the efforts of zoos to bring people and bears closer together; indeed the dramatically contrasting environment of enclosure in warmer, humid climates has also made the experience of polar bears representative of the misery of confinement.²

Polar bears were even more exotic for medieval European societies; in complete contrast to lions, they rarely feature in contemporary art and literature, and only a few living individuals appear to have been shipped in from Arctic Norway and Greenland. In these regions, local communities had developed methods of both hunting polar bears and capturing them alive; their bones have been found in at least fifteen medieval Norse faunal assemblages in Greenland, associated with a range of sites such as large farms with churches, smaller coastal farms and inland farms. Recovered skeletal elements suggest quick and rough field skinning – fine cut marks on many of the phalanges point to

¹ ‘Peppy the polar bear’ has featured as the logo of Fox’s ‘glacier mints’ since 1922.

² On the polar bear in general, see Ian Stirling, *Polar Bears* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988). For a detailed bibliography see the official website of the Polar Bear Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (<http://pbsg.npolar.no>)

their removal during the final finishing of a hide.³ The comparatively limited remains of polar bears within archaeological contexts at their source region mirrors the few references to pelts shipped into medieval Europe. A rare example is from the customs records of the Norwegian king Haakon V dating to 1316, which refer to merchants from Bruges and Lübeck obtaining two polar bear pelts in Bergen.⁴ Capturing these animals alive (even as cubs) must have been an incredibly dangerous and infrequent event, one motivated by facilitating access to the most luxurious market – European rulers. *Einars Þáttr Sökkasonar* mentions a live polar bear brought to Norway as a royal bribe,⁵ whilst *Auðunar þáttur vestfirski* tells the story of an Icelander who spends all his money on a live bear from Greenland and makes his fortune by presenting it to King Svein of Denmark.⁶ Both Henry III of England and Philip IV of France had ‘white bears’, the former presented by the Norwegian king Haakon IV in 1252.⁷

But whilst the polar bear ranked as one of the most unusual and prestigious exotics in medieval Europe, its cousin the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) was widely distributed in the northern hemisphere. Like polar bears, these were also difficult animals to hunt, even more difficult to capture alive and by the turn of the second millennium, they were not available everywhere. Populations survived in many parts of Continental and Scandinavian Europe into the twentieth century, and some areas such as the Central Apennine and eastern Carpathian mountain chains have had continuous bear presence into the present day.⁸ In England, where baiting is documented from the late-Saxon period, they were most probably imported for this purpose, since bears appear to have become extinct in the region by the Iron Age.⁹ One obvious ‘source’ for what became an ‘exotic’ from the latter centuries of the first millennium was Scandinavia. Here, brown bears were available in the wooded and mountainous interior of the peninsula, and their remains have been found in a number of Viking-age burials, as well as trading hubs and later medieval urban centres.¹⁰ Bear pelts were a comparatively unusual commodity, and

³ Thomas McGovern, “The Arctic frontier of Norse Greenland,” in *The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries*, ed. Stanton W. Green and Stephen M. Perlman (London: Academic Press, 1985), 298–299 (hereafter: McGovern, “Arctic frontier”); Kirsten Seaver, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000–1500* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) (hereafter: Seaver, *Frozen Echo*).

⁴ Robert Delort, *Le commerce des fourrures en occident à la fin du Moyen âge (vers 1300 - vers 1450)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1978), 1:121–2 (hereafter: Delort, *Commerce*).

⁵ Gwyn Jones, *The Norse Atlantic Saga: Being the Norse Voyages of Discovery and Settlement to Iceland, Greenland, and North America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 203.

⁶ Viðar Hreinsson, *The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders* (Reykjavik: Leifur Eiríksson, 1997), 1:369–375.

⁷ Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 20 (hereafter: Hahn, *Tower Menagerie*).

⁸ See individual regional papers in “Brown Bear Conservation Action Plan for Europe,” in *Bears*, ed. Christopher Servheen, Stephen Herrero and Bernard Peyton (Gland: IUCN: Cambridge, 1999), 55–122.

⁹ Derek Yalden, *History of British Mammals* (London: Poyser, 2001).

¹⁰ Przemysław Urbańczyk, *Medieval Arctic Norway* (Warsaw: Semper, 1992).

typically acquired as 'trophies' of aristocratic hunts across Europe; there was little commercial market for their fur, certainly nothing remotely approaching the international demand for other species.¹¹ Whilst the remains of bears in medieval archaeological contexts are perhaps more easily explained in terms of opportunistic hunting, in northern Scandinavia the ritualistic treatment of bear bones continued throughout the Middle Ages and into the twentieth century.¹² Echoes of this paradigm can be found in stories of warriors shape shifting into bears produced largely in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹³

Further south, in Continental Europe, indigenous bears were hunted, sometimes for their meat, and captured alive for baiting and dancing; their remains in medieval archaeological contexts are the end result of a combination of these activities.¹⁴ The bear, a popular medieval symbol of wilderness and wildness was conflated by Boccaccio with the figure of the wild man, in a description of a 'mock hunt' in his mid-fourteenth century *Decameron*, perhaps the earliest reference to the 'bear mummer' which continues to feature in seasonal festivities in many regions of Europe into the present day.¹⁵ Combined with its association with wilderness – an environment at the periphery of human activity – the brown bear could occupy a position of relative exoticism, which, like the fallow deer and rabbit (and unlike the polar bear) varied at the local level within Europe.

The example of the two bear species outlined above supports the use of the term 'exoticism' in modern analysis as an index of familiarity, a construct that can be understood from multiple perspectives. This paper will demonstrate the diversity of physical and conceptual experiences of unusual, unfamiliar species within medieval Christendom. In the available space, it cannot begin to offer comprehensive reconstructions of the 'life histories' of exotic animal products from procurement to final deposition, but represents a point of departure for expanding our understanding of the role of exotica beyond the walls of treasuries and 'menageries', a perspective already

¹¹ Delort, *Commerce*, 328.

¹² Inger Zachrisson and Elisabeth Iregren, *Lappish Bear Graves in Northern Sweden: An Archaeological and Osteological Study* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Early Norrland 5, 1974); Carl-Martin Edsman, "La fête de l'ours chez les Lapons: sources anciennes et recherches récentes sur certains rites de chasse aux confins septentrionaux de la Scandinavie," *Proxima Thulé: Revue d'études nordiques* 2 (1996): 11-49.

¹³ Hilda Ellis Davidson, "Shape-changing in the Old Norse Sagas," in *Animals in Folklore*, ed. Joshua Roy Porter and William M. S. Russell (Ipswich: D. S. Brewer, 1978), 126-142.

¹⁴ For the most recent work on the medieval bear see Michel Pastoureau, *L'ours : Histoire d'un roi déchu* (Paris : Seuil, 2007).

¹⁵ Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 49; see also papers in Piercarlo Grimaldi, ed., *Bestie, Santi, Divinità: Maschere Animali dell'Europa Tradizionale* (Torino: Museo Nazionale della Montagna, 2003).

evident in recent work on medieval Islamic animal-related material culture.¹⁶ It begins by considering the value and use of ‘exoticism’ in analytical contexts, before outlining how regions supplying unusual animals were perceived, and comparing this with the diversity of foreign animal products imported into Europe. Only a limited number of species were imported – whether physically or conceptually – from the ‘edges of the world’, but having arrived within new ecological and cultural contexts, they could be readily manipulated, transformed and in some cases, fully appropriated into the fabric of medieval European societies.

WHAT IS EXOTIC?

From a modern perspective, the term ‘exotic’ is convenient for describing the status of particular species of animals in medieval western European culture – referring to something foreign and unusual, often intriguing. From an archaeological perspective, the term is useful in identifying the presence and products of non-indigenous species in medieval contexts; hence bears (*Ursus arctos*) in high medieval England can be considered as ‘exotic’ as fallow deer (*Dama dama*), when situated in contemporary ecological contexts. Over the course of the Middle Ages some animals, most notably fallow deer in England and France, became indigenised after a successful introduction, but others remained foreign and unusual. Others still became effectively ‘exotic’ as their numbers were reduced. The term ‘exotic’ is therefore a useful dynamic index of abundance and familiarity, with significant implications for understanding the cultural and commercial values attached to individual species. It is also, by definition, an ecologically-relative construct; animals became ‘exotic’ having been moved from their indigenous environment to a foreign one, and their cultural role could be significantly transformed over the course of their initial acquisition to final deposition.

A case in point is provided by the fallow deer, lion and wolf in England; a process of physical ‘indigenisation’ for the deer, conceptual ‘indigenisation’ for the lion and ‘exoticisation’ for the wolf. Fallow deer were re-introduced into England over the course of the twelfth century and enclosed in parks accompanying a distinct hunting ritual that was adopted from Sicily, developed in England and then spread to France and later Germany.¹⁷ Fallow deer were effectively as exotic as camels at this point, but by the thirteenth century they could be found in the open ‘forests’, and the zooarchaeological record of high-status sites indicates a shift in reliance from roe deer in the late-Anglo-Saxon period through to fallow deer by the thirteenth century, culminating in the

¹⁶ Avinoam Shalem, *The Oliphant: Islamic Objects in Historical Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) (hereafter: Shalem, *Oliphant*).

¹⁷ Naomi Sykes, “The zooarchaeology of the Norman Conquest,” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 27 (2005): 185-97.

roe deer losing its protected status in the early-fourteenth century.¹⁸ The rabbit accompanied fallow deer as an exotic with a similar chronology, but did not proliferate in the countryside until the sixteenth century. The English wolf population, on the other hand, was hunted with such intensity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that it seemed unable to recover after the mid-fourteenth century.¹⁹ Lupine remains are almost never found in the contemporary archaeological record, but written sources catalogue persecution focused on royal demesnes. By the sixteenth century the wolf was so exotic, so unusual, that a single individual was considered worth housing in the Tower of London ‘menagerie’, representing “the last wolf in England”.²⁰ The wolf rarely seized the imagination of medieval English artists, unlike the quintessential predator of the southern Mediterranean and Middle East: the lion.

The lion, a long-established symbol in Christian iconography, proliferates in Western European religious contexts from the ninth century. However, over the course of the twelfth century, the lion becomes established in secular literature and heraldry, as well as a new wave of religious art. In England, levels of familiarity with the lion had built up from before the Norman Conquest; the animal was employed, in varying degrees of stylisation, as a flexible symbol in late Anglo-Saxon secular and religious contexts.²¹ But true conceptual familiarity would only become possible over the course of the twelfth century, when lions were established as prominent motifs in religious and heraldic iconography.²² The pool of leonine lore circulating in Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, drawn from Biblical and Classical sources (both traditions synthesised in bestiaries), guided how poets and artists used the animal in imaginative contexts to communicate meanings effectively to their respective audiences. The regal status of the lion in the West had been established at a very early date in the *Physiologus*;²³ and became closely associated with kings not only in its deployment in royal heraldry, but also by the acquisition of living lions from the reign of Henry I.²⁴ The royal ‘menagerie’ was moved from its original location in a park in Woodstock to the Tower of London by Henry III in 1252, and exotic large cats continued to be kept there

¹⁸ Richard Thomas, “They were what they ate: maintaining social boundaries through the consumption of food in medieval England,” in *We Are What We Eat: Archaeology, Food and Identity*, ed. Katherine Twiss (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, forthcoming).

¹⁹ Aleks Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 7.

²¹ Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Carola Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993) (hereafter: Hicks, *Animals*).

²² Michel Pastoureau, *Traité d'héraldique* (Paris: Grands Manuels Picard, 1993), 136-139; idem, “Pourquoi tant de lions dans l'occident médiéval,” *Micrologus* 8:1 (2000): 25-30.

²³ Margaret Haist, “The lion, bloodline and kingship,” in *The Mark of the Beast*, ed. Debra Hassig (New York: Routledge, 2000), 18-19 (hereafter: Haist, “Lion”).

²⁴ Hahn, *Tower Menagerie*, 13-16.

alongside various other species into the nineteenth century.²⁵ Two lion skulls (amongst an assemblage of other bones, including the partial skull of a leopard) were recovered during excavations of the 'lion tower' in the 1930s, belonging to young animals aged three to four years, and recently radiocarbon-dated to c.1280-1385 and c.1420-1480.²⁶ By the fourteenth century, the lion (or rather *lion-leopardé*) had become closely associated with the identity of the English king Edward III, especially in political juxtapositions with the French crown.²⁷

Yet the development of the lion's role in the West contrasted in some ways with responses to the animal at the fringes of Christendom; here lions had been long-associated with the ruling class through hunting culture and royalty.²⁸ References to lion hunting in the rules of the military orders suggest that the activity was taken up by incoming Europeans in the Middle East, and lions continued to be documented in Syria, Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula into the nineteenth century.²⁹ On the other hand, in Byzantine art the lion is predominantly a Christian symbol, and for Christian and Jewish pilgrims travelling to holy sites in the Middle East, lions became familiar protectors of sacred bones, reflecting an important role in the Old Testament where they feature as instruments of divine authority.³⁰ In the West, the lion was never shown hunted like a buck or rabbit, moreover the influence of bestiary lore had emphasised the king of beasts' strength and mercy, and transferred its negative traits of ferocity and blood-thirstiness to the leopard.³¹ Whilst the leonine qualities of kings and warriors were expressed through the flexible use of lion's image in visual display, interest in the real animal itself was limited to the living symbols in London. There is no evidence for the importation of real (or the use of simulated) lion pelts, and the absence of cut marks on the lion skulls from the Tower suggests that the animals were not skinned before being

²⁵ These collections of animals become referred to as 'menageries' in the eighteenth century, see Vernon N. Kisling, Jr., "Ancient collections and menageries," in *Zoo and Aquarium History: Ancient Animal Collections to Zoological Gardens*, ed. Vernon N. Kisling, jr., (London: CRC Press, 2001), 28. The term is used throughout this paper with this caveat; Hahn, *Tower Menagerie*, 18-19.

²⁶ Hannah O'Regan, Alan Turner and Richard Sabin, "Medieval big cat remains from the Royal Menagerie at the Tower of London," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, 16/2 (2006): 385-394 (hereafter: O'Regan, Turner and Sabin, "Cat remains").

²⁷ Caroline Shenton, "Edward III and the symbol of the leopard," in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), 69-81.

²⁸ For example, see Muhammad Manazir Ahsan, *Social Life Under the Abbasids, 170-289 AH, 786-902 AD* (London: Longman, 1979), 204-5, 214; Hicks, *Animals*, 254; Max Grünert, *Der Löwe in der Literatur der Araber* (Prague: Verlag des Wissenschaftlichen Vereins für Volkskunde und Linguistik, 1899).

²⁹ Vladimir Georgievich Heptner and N. P. Naumov, *Mammals of the Soviet Union*, volume II, part 2: *Carnivora* (Moscow: Vysshaya Shkloa Publishers, 1972), 90-91.

³⁰ Elka Weber, "Sharing the sites: medieval Jewish travellers to the Land of Israel," in *Eastward Bound: Travel and Travellers, 1050-1550*, ed. Rosamund Allen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 34-51.

³¹ Haist, "Lion," 13.

buried.³² The lion's use in medieval England – and elsewhere in Europe – developed within a specific context far removed from its original ecological and cultural source; it was transmitted as a Christian and socio-political idea, and ultimately as a commercial expression of the latter.

The lion's role across Europe varied; in Venice the winged lion of St. Mark became adopted as a political symbol from the latter half of the thirteenth century, when it became associated with ducal authority and the expanding power of the Serenissima. This was exemplified by a bronze lion procured from Constantinople shortly before 1261, and placed on one of the giant columns in front of the Doge's palace before the end of the century.³³ Like the use of the English lion during the Hundred Years War, the winged lion would become emblematic of Venetian dominion in eastern Mediterranean material culture, and whilst both came to symbolise 'nations' into the modern era, their development followed very different trajectories.

The prevalence of exotic species within Europe is difficult to gauge with any precision, but with the exception of bulk commodities such as wool and leather, and as demonstrated above with the examples of polar bears, lions and even fallow deer, foreign animal products imported into Europe were typically *luxury* commodities, aimed at specific markets with high purchasing power. They represented a fraction of the total range of goods in medieval European commerce; indeed, few studies of trade and economics in the Middle Ages even mention exotic animals in passing, let alone in any detail. This lack of scholarly attention is underlined by the fact that international trade from regions beyond the frontiers of Christendom was relatively limited; in the case of medieval Africa, attention has focused on inter-regional trade between different climatic zones within the continent, rather than the export of luxury goods which, in comparison, was economically and culturally insignificant.³⁴ Exoticism is therefore an index of familiarity, and so in addition to the presence of exotic material culture, levels of familiarity can be gauged with the prevalence of exotic species in art, literature (with varying levels of exposure to different audiences) and, increasingly in the late-medieval period, the documented experiences of these animals in their natural environments by Europeans.

Today, the majority of Europeans experience exotic animals through the medium of film. Whilst television makes ordinarily inaccessible animals readily accessible, their subjects are framed in ways that express the fusion of multiple technical and conceptual agendas of their creators.³⁵ This is perhaps an appropriate analogy for con-

³² O'Regan, Turner and Sabin, "Cat remains."

³³ Alberto Rizzi, *Leone di San Marco: Il simbolo della Repubblica Veneta nella scultura e nella pittura*, volume 1 (Venice: Arsenale, 2001), 22-25.

³⁴ Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Medieval Africa, 1250-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

³⁵ Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).

textualising the dissemination of animal lore through religious and heraldic art; both deployed animals in accessible and familiar ways to communicate specific, engineered meanings. Therefore the sources of exotic animals must also be sought within European culture itself. As in the case of indigenous species, there was no simple relationship between those animals (and related products) brought from beyond the 'edges of the world', and those imagined in the minds of artisans and poets.

IMAGINING EXOTIC ANIMALS AT THE 'EDGES OF THE WORLD'

New information regarding foreign lands became unevenly available in Western Europe before the invention of printing, although it could be tracked down and used if needed.³⁶ Biogeographical information derived from Biblical and Classical sources found visual expression in the *mappaemundi*, largely produced from the twelfth to mid-fourteenth century.³⁷ The compilers of such cosmological maps, like the producers of bestiary and encyclopaedic entries, had usually never visited the regions they described, but referred to established scholastic authority; animals were placed according to the descriptions of Herodotus, Pliny, Aelian and Solinus. Indeed, their 'zoologies' had very explicit ideological agendas; from the representation of religious allegory to a reaffirmation of 'the otherness' at and beyond the frontiers of Christendom. China, India and the Mongol Empire were, on the face of it, beyond 'the frontiers of medieval macrospace'.³⁸ However, knowledge of these regions was sufficiently advanced to have rendered Mandeville's unimaginably wealthy Prester John, and his exotic realm in the East, an outmoded archaism employed as a heterotopian mirror for European society, illustrating a range of contemporary theological and moral concerns – a result of literary synthesis and imagination rather than experience.³⁹ But whilst *Mandeville's Travels* may have been a continuation of this tradition, European travellers increasingly pushed the boundaries of Cartesian geographic experience, and some, like William de Baldensel and Leonardo Frescobaldi, travellers to Egypt who described giraffes,⁴⁰ wrote about their encounters in detail. Christian Zacher has argued that *curiositas* – the sense of curiosity – was not only considered morally vacuous by influential Christian thinkers like Augustine and Aquinas, but also spiritually dangerous.⁴¹ Following scholastic reasoning, *admiratio* or

³⁶ Bernard Hamilton, "The impact of the crusades on western Geographical knowledge," in *Eastward Bound: Travel and Travellers, 1050-1550*, ed. Rosamund Allen (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2004), 29.

³⁷ Catherine Delano-Smith, "The intelligent pilgrim: maps and medieval pilgrimage to the Holy Land," in *Eastward Bound: Travel and Travellers, 1050-1550*, ed. Rosamund Allen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 115 (hereafter: Delano-Smith, "Pilgrim").

³⁸ Sebastian, I. Sobecki, "Mandeville's thought of the limit: the discourse of similarity and difference in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*," *The Review of English Studies*, 53/211 (2002): 329-343, 331.

³⁹ *Ibidem*

⁴⁰ Clive A. Spinage, *The Book of the Giraffe* (London: Collins, 1968), 60 (hereafter: Spinage, *Giraffe*).

⁴¹ Christian Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1976), 18-41.

wonder was the first step towards knowledge – fundamental for teaching – but truth was not dependent on personal experience.⁴² In this respect the understanding of exotic species through allegory, literature and emblematic art could over-ride direct experience.⁴³ Nonetheless, the tension between conventional wisdom and experience becomes increasingly evident in medieval travel literature. During the course of his visit to the court of the great Khan in the mid-thirteenth century, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck asked his hosts about the monsters mentioned by Isidore and Solinus. He was told such creatures had never been sighted, prompting doubt of their very existence in William's mind.⁴⁴ Marco Polo, writing a few decades later following his long sojourn in the Mongol Empire, dismisses conventional stories of salamanders and unicorns, as well as stating that those who bring home 'pygmies from India' have been cheated with the bodies of depilated monkeys.⁴⁵ Indeed, *fabulae* or stories had become increasingly contrasted with what was perceived to be more authentic *historia* from the twelfth century,⁴⁶ and doubt generated through experience was in part responsible for the decline in *map-paemundi* in the latter half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁷ When the earliest representations of Ara macaws appeared on a map of South America, they represented the increasing input of experience over scholasticism in driving changing understanding of regional animal biogeography.⁴⁸

At the opposite end of the spectrum, documentary and archaeological sources indicate a different level of awareness of the sources and availability of exotica, associated with mercantile networks in both northern and southern Europe. The importation of exotica into Europe has left traces in the archaeological record, and combined with mercantile texts provide not only information on what was moved, but also their provenance and how they were transported and re-distributed. These are rarely a match for some of the more detailed descriptions of courtly gift exchange, but they provide insights into exotic animal commerce and movement at the broadest scale.

⁴² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 74 (hereafter: Bynum, *Metamorphosis*).

⁴³ Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic. Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 250.

⁴⁴ Peter Jackson, "William of Rubruck in the Mongol Empire: Perception and prejudices," in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction*, ed. Zweder von Martels (Brill: Leiden, 1994) 57-8 (54-71).

⁴⁵ John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 82.

⁴⁶ Bynum, *Metamorphosis*, 54.

⁴⁷ Delano-Smith, "Pilgrim," 116.

⁴⁸ Wilma George, *Animals and Maps* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1969), 35, 60.

THE 'REALITY' OF EXOTICS FROM 'THE EDGES OF THE WORLD'

Foreign species were physically imported into Europe in three forms: as live individuals, artefacts or components with a recognisable zoological identity, and as raw materials with less distinct morphological features, most notably elephant and walrus ivory.⁴⁹ The bulk of exotic animal products consisted of furs and ivory and developed as a result of sustained demand, representing a significant element in the economies of some source regions, such as Russia and Greenland. However, European consumers typically represented only one market for these suppliers – East Africa, for example, provided elephant ivory to France and living giraffes to Bengal and China.⁵⁰ The exotic animal trade in the Middle Ages must therefore be situated within the broadest Eurasian, African and trans-north-Atlantic trading contexts.

By the eleventh century, Norse settlements and farms had been established in southern Greenland – what became the westernmost rim of Christendom, and began to supply a variety of products for export. The distance between Greenland and Europe ensured that only low bulk, valuable commodities were worth procuring for long-distance trade.⁵¹ These included walrus and narwhal ivory; several hundred of the former may have been shipped to Europe annually,⁵² as well as the furs of polar bears, white and blue polar foxes and weasels; caribou and seal skins and blubber; oils from cod and Greenland shark livers, and live white falcons.⁵³ Raw walrus ivory was exported to workshops in the British Isles – particularly Winchester, and in France – Paris, along a series of trade routes identifiable through written and archaeological sources.⁵⁴ Walrus hunting declined in Greenland in the latter half of the fifteenth century; whilst products such as narwhal tusk retained a value, even increased in demand at this time, dried cod and train oil represented the main cash goods right up to the disappearance of the Norse colonies in Greenland at the end of the fifteenth century.⁵⁵ Similar animal products – walrus products, mustelid furs and occasional polar bears – were available from Arctic Norway; at the very periphery of Norwegian royal authority and the northernmost frontier of medieval Christendom.

⁴⁹ Aleks Pluskowski, "Narwhales or unicorns? Exotic animals as material culture in medieval Europe," *Journal of European Archaeology*, 7 (2004): 291-313 (hereafter: Pluskowski, "Narwhales").

⁵⁰ Spinage, *Giraffe*, 62-63.

⁵¹ McGovern, "Arctic frontier," 275-323.

⁵² *Ibidem*, 306.

⁵³ Seaver, *Frozen Echo*, 48; Thomas McGovern, "Bones, buildings and boundaries: palaeoeconomic approaches to Norse Greenland," in *Norse and Later Settlement and Subsistence in the North Atlantic*, ed. Christopher D. Morris and D. James Rackham (Glasgow: Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow Occasional Paper, 1992), 193-230.

⁵⁴ Else Roesdahl, "L'ivoire de morse et les colonies noroises du Groenland," *Proxima Thulé*, 3 (1998): 9-48.

⁵⁵ Seaver, *Frozen Echo*, 249.

The movement of Scandinavians eastwards, in the latter centuries of the first millennium AD, was closely linked to the development of trade networks between the Baltic and Black Sea. By the second millennium, exotic animal products from the White Sea region became increasingly accessible to European and Middle Eastern markets through the city of Novgorod, a key point of re-distribution of walrus ivory and furs derived from northern Russia.⁵⁶ Over 300 walrus ivory artefacts together with waste fragments have been recovered from Novgorod, representing the largest concentration from a single medieval town, initially appearing around the tenth century and peaking in the thirteenth century.⁵⁷ Over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the growing demand for luxury fur from Bulgar, Byzantine and Baltic markets prompted Novgorod's traders to search for additional tributaries and trading partners, extend the city's domain northward and eastward; this territory became peppered with *pogosts* – administrative centres responsible for collecting taxes and tribute in luxury fur pelts, particularly northern grey squirrel.⁵⁸ The town of Ustiug represented a portal to northwestern Siberia; a source for which both Moscow and the Kazan Khanate were competing in the fifteenth century.⁵⁹ Ultimately, the success of the squirrel fur network prompted aristocratic demand to switch to more exclusive sable, fox and marten pelts, in part contributing to Novgorod's decline. Whilst Scandinavian and later Mongolian expansion drove the medieval Eurasian fur trade, the crusading era in the Eastern Baltic came to represent a land of opportunity for aspiring knights, replacing the earlier focus of the Holy Land. Hunting expeditions formed an important part of the 'Baltic experience' for itinerant crusaders as well as the resident Teutonic Order, and potential quarries included beaver – a staple of the Livonian fur trade – bison and even aurochs.⁶⁰ Bison horns reached as far west as Paris, where one example was recorded as a griffin claw in the treasury of St. Denis.⁶¹

The Teutonic Order came to play a fundamental role in the movement of luxury furs in the Baltic region, but its members were also consumers of exotic commodities, the most unusual of which were leopard pelts. These were readily obtainable from west-

⁵⁶ Janet Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: the Fur Trade and its Significance for Medieval Russia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) (hereafter: Martin, *Treasure*); Mark Brisbane and Mark Maltby, "Love letters to bare bones: a comparison of two types of evidence for the use of animals in medieval Novgorod," *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, 18(2002): 99-119.

⁵⁷ Lyubov Smirnova, "Utilisation of rare bone materials in medieval Novgorod," in *Crafting Bone: Skeletal Technologies through Time and Space: Proceedings of the 2nd Meeting of the (ICAZ) Worked Bone Research Group*, ed. Alice Choyke and Laszlo Bartosiewicz, BAR International Series, 937 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001), 9.

⁵⁸ Martin, *Treasure*, 53.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 100.

⁶⁰ Klaus Militzer, "Jagd und Deutscher Orden," in *Jagd und böfische Kulatur im Mittelalter*, ed. Werner Rösener (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 324-363.

⁶¹ Daniel Alcouffe, *Le trésor de Saint-Denis* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1991), 223-225.

ern Asia; particularly the Russian steppes, Mongolia and Asia Minor.⁶² These regions were also the source of live cheetahs for late-medieval aristocratic markets. The aristocratic practice of coursing with cheetahs was initially restricted to the eastern periphery of Latin Christendom. In Byzantium, the practice is attested from the tenth through to the thirteenth centuries, after which cheetahs began to feature more in occasional ceremonial functions, whilst in eastern Europe, the custom of hunting with cheetahs and falcons arose from the direct contact with the inhabitants of central Asia – the Turks, Mongols and Tartars.⁶³ This method of hunting was particularly well suited to the vast, flat steppe, as well as the Middle East; Usāmah ibn-Munqidh's description of twelfth-century Syrian hunting practices provides detailed insights into the use of cheetahs for taking gazelle, and includes anecdotes on their treatment. Usāmah's father owned a female cheetah prone to epileptic fits although subsequently enthusiastic about her hunting; she slept in the house on her own bed and was groomed with a comb by a maid.⁶⁴ In Outremer, Frankish lords adopted this local aristocratic practice; another episode in Usāmah's autobiography refers to a Frank in Haifa who tried to sell him a leopard and pass it off as a cheetah.⁶⁵ Subsequently, coursing with cheetahs is most readily associated with French and Italian nobility in the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the practise then spreading to other parts of Europe.⁶⁶

Whilst the Asiatic trade in exotic goods was mediated by centres such as Novgorod and Constantinople, the unprecedented expansion of trade in the Mediterranean from the late-eleventh century increasingly connected Christian (particularly Italian) with Muslim merchants, and, despite the crusades, facilitated the movement of exotic animal products. These were predominantly ivory, but also body parts such as leopard pelts and ibex horns, as well as living specimens such as lions and camels re-distributed from trading hubs along the North African and Middle Eastern coastlines into Europe.⁶⁷ Bones of the latter have been found in sites in Russia, Romania, Italy and

⁶² Janet Martin, "The land of darkness and the Golden Horde. The fur trade under the Mongols. XIII-XIVth centuries," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 19:4 (1978): 401-421; Laszlo Bartosiewicz, "A leopard (*Panthera pardus* L. 1758) find from the Late Middle Ages in Hungary," in *Animals and Man in the Past*, ed. H. Buitenhuis and Wietske Prummel, (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit, 2001), 151-160; see also references to leopard in Delort, *Commerce*.

⁶³ Nick Nicholas, "A conundrum of cats: pards and their relatives in Byzantium," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 40, 3 (2001): 253-298 (261-268).

⁶⁴ Philip K. Hitti, *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades; Memoirs of Usāmah ibn-Munqidh* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 236-7.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 141.

⁶⁶ Charles A. W. Guggisberg, *Wild Cats of the World* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975), 266-267 (hereafter: Guggisberg, *Wild Cats*).

⁶⁷ Michel Balard, "A Christian Mediterranean: 1000-1500," in *The Mediterranean in History*, ed. David Abulafia, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 183-217; Shalem, *Oliphant*, 104-112.

Iberia dating from the ninth to fourteenth centuries,⁶⁸ and live camels were moved as far north as England, where they are documented at Woodstock in the twelfth century, at the royal palace of Langley (Hertfordshire) in the late-thirteenth century,⁶⁹ and in Thetford (Norfolk) in the early-sixteenth century.⁷⁰ By the crusading era, Muslim merchants had established trading networks with a number of regions in Africa, providing access to a potentially enormous diversity of exotica. But whilst Arabic sources from the ninth to fifteenth centuries contain numerous references to camels and elephants as well as crocodiles, gazelle, hippopotamus, hyena, lion, oryx, ostrich and parrots,⁷¹ only a limited category of animal products appears to have reached Europe. Living specimens ranged from Barbary Apes to elephants; the Sultan of Egypt presented giraffes as gifts to the Khan of the Golden Horde, Emperor Frederick II and his son Manfred;⁷² the Nile was the source of occasional crocodile remains deposited in ecclesiastical treasuries (e.g. the chapel in Karlstejn castle), whilst eastern Africa represented the main supplier of elephant ivory. This was the most important exotic animal product from beyond the southern periphery of Christendom. India and China were firmly established as the major markets for both elephant and rhinoceros ivory from eastern Africa by the tenth century, but there is comparatively little evidence for the use of elephant ivory in Europe, probably resulting from a combination of economic stagnation following the disintegration of the Roman Empire, and supply problems from sources in Africa and the Middle East – specifically related to the over-exploitation of the north African elephant and the Persian conquest of South Arabia.⁷³ Between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, tusks were mainly imported from East Africa, following maritime trade routes from Zanzibar, Somaliland and Madagascar, as well as being transported overland to Cairo and Alexandria, where they were carved by Egyptian artisans or redistributed to other Mediterranean ivory-carving centres.

From the late-thirteenth century, the trade in ivory shadowed the trade in gold, following a relatively well-documented route from eastern Africa – facilitated by the seafaring Swahili people – through to Tunis and then into the Mediterranean. The high point of the Swahili trading network lasted from c. 1250-1350, corresponding with the dominance of ivory as a luxury material in Western Europe. The most influential work-

⁶⁸ Umberto Albarella, "Companions of our travel: the archaeological evidence of animals in exile," in *Fauna and Flora in the Middle Ages*, ed. Sieglinde Hartmann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 141.

⁶⁹ Hahn, *Tower Menagerie*, 42.

⁷⁰ David Dymond, *The Register of Thetford Priory*, pt. 2 (1518-40) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 390, 463.

⁷¹ Nehemia Levtzion and J.F.P. Hopkins, ed. and trans., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2000).

⁷² Spinage, *Giraffe*, 55-56.

⁷³ Edwards A. Alpers, "The ivory trade in Africa: an historical overview," in *Elephant: the Animal and its Ivory in African Culture*, ed. Doran H. Ross (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1992), 352-53.

shop handling ivory sprung up in Paris from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, initially catering for the French court and subsequently the European nobility. Between 1270 and 1400 it produced the majority of the 2000 to 3000 ivory objects which survive today in various public and private collections. By the fifteenth century, sources of ivory from the coastal hinterland of eastern Africa appear to have become exhausted, although a system of established trading networks stretching from the interior to the coast enabled ivory supply to continue to meet demands from overseas markets. The collapse of ivory-working in Paris by the start of the fifteenth century has been linked with the interruption of trade routes to India – on the basis that Indian elephant ivory provided the bulk of the raw material.⁷⁴

A comprehensive ecological survey of each source region described above cannot be attempted within the confines of this paper, however what is clear is that whilst regions at and beyond the edges of medieval Christendom were populated with an incredibly diverse range of animal species, only a minute fraction of this diversity was procured for European markets. The movement of these luxury commodities, even in the case of furs, was significantly overshadowed by the trade in staple animal products, particularly wool and leather. Some animals, although attracting the attention of writers and artists, were not brought into Europe. For example, the tiger, which features in medieval European (particularly religious) art was, in theory, accessible via Middle Eastern trade routes linking the eastern Mediterranean with India and south east Asia, however the first living tiger in medieval Europe is only documented in 1478, when Yolanda, Duchess of Savoy obtained and kept one at her castle in Turin, after which several appeared at the court of Ferrara and a number were obtained by Francis I.⁷⁵ Lions, elephants and giraffes were more readily available for aristocratic markets, whether as diplomatic gifts (such as the ones sent to King Alfonso X of Castile in 1260) or to stock collections of exotica (such as Frederick II's 'menagerie' in Palermo).⁷⁶ On the other hand, the export of walrus ivory from Greenland, elephant ivory from East Africa and squirrel furs from northern Russia was fundamental to the economies of these regions, and prompted the development of sophisticated and reliable networks of acquisition and re-distribution.

In all of these frontier regions, the procurement of animals and their products for export to European markets was dominated by local elites, who facilitated their acquisition and transport. In Greenland, the elite played a fundamental role in local subsistence activities and religious ceremonial, and dominated the export of exotics, pro-

⁷⁴ Richard H. Randall, "Popular romances carved in ivory," in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. Peter Barnet (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1997), 63-79.

⁷⁵ Guggisberg, *Wild Cats*, 181.

⁷⁶ Barry Taylor, "Late medieval Spanish travellers in the East: Clavijo, Tafur, Encina and Tarifa," in *Eastward Bound: Travel and Travellers, 1050-1550*, ed. Rosamund Allen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 231.

cured through a combination of hunting and trade with the local Inuit. The remains of polar bear and walrus in Norse Greenland middens confirm these animals were hunted; the persistence of this activity at a time of declining contact with Europe and increasing contact with the Inuit most probably reflected continuing elite interests in maintaining transatlantic contact.⁷⁷ The procurement of exotics in Arctic Norway – black foxes and hares, white martens, walrus ivory and polar bears – was again dependent on developed economic co-operation with local Sami populations as well as local hunting.⁷⁸ Over the course of the eleventh century, this supply network became subordinated to the commercial and political demands of the Norwegian crown.⁷⁹ Comparable power-relations governed the trade in exotics from the Middle East, Africa and India, as well as the supply of luxury furs from Russia.

Reconstructing power-relations at source regions is crucial to understanding the procurement of exotica, whilst patterns of export can be related to changing demand and availability, particularly for raw materials such as ivory. At the other end of the spectrum were commodities which appear to have had little function in medieval European society other than being unusual and exotic; their market was perennial but, particularly in the context of royal gift-exchange, even more exclusive. Leopard skins are the best example of a relatively ‘popular’ exotic pelt which did not readily fit into the established fur hierarchy based on indigenous species. Even more obscure were skins belonging to lions and giraffes; the latter were exported from the town of El Jub in East Africa in the thirteenth century.⁸⁰ Whilst the procurement of exotic animals can be seen from an economic perspective, determining the roles constructed for them within local cultural contexts is crucial to understanding how and why the products of certain species were re-contextualised from source to destination.

CONCLUSION: RE-CONTEXTUALISING EXOTIC ANIMALS IN EUROPE

Exotic animals and related products entering Europe have a spatial and chronological distribution which has both inter-regional similarities and local variation. In the case of rabbits and fallow deer they have a significant ecological impact in north-western Europe. The majority of exotica were brought in from the fringes of Europe, including Christian regions, but also frontier zones and beyond, sometimes representing the final destinations of pan-Eurasian and trans-Atlantic trade. This distance and increasing lack of contact between producer and consumer (i.e. use of mercantile intermediaries) en-

⁷⁷ McGovern, “Arctic frontier,” 311.

⁷⁸ Przemysław Urbańczyk, *Medieval Arctic Norway* (Warszawa: Semper, 1992).

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 201–203.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*

abled both seller and buyer to construct new, more culturally relevant identities for their animal products.

Exotic animals could be 'broken down' into a set of components – conceptually and physically – emphasising different meanings; a living elephant may have been prized for its novelty as an unusual and physically impressive animal, its tusks lent themselves to the construction of decorated 'oliphants' as well as a range of products where the rarity, colour and luminosity of ivory was far more important than its zoological identity. There is, for example, no evidence of emphasising the animal source of elephant or walrus ivory in the construction of religious artefacts. In the case of narwhal ivory, a more unusual commodity, the preservation of the distinct shape of the animal's tusk in high medieval artefacts suggests its morphology and zoological identity – that of a unicorn – were important.⁸¹ Once the link between morphology and identity had become standardised, there was no longer any need to emphasise its shape, and in the late-medieval period unicorn horn could be chopped up, ground into powder and reduced to a form bearing little relation to the characteristic spiral that crowned the heads of most unicorns in public and private art. Although the re-contextualisation of the Greenland narwhal as European unicorn is a well-known and extreme example, the extent of this type of transformation varied from one species (and product) to the next.

It is appropriate to conclude this discussion with the ostrich; a species which continues to be perceived as 'exotic' despite being farmed in the West, perhaps because its products remain largely imported from outside Europe. The trade in ostrich eggs is archaeologically documented across the Mediterranean in later prehistory, and in medieval North Africa and the Middle East, where they were widely used in Coptic, Armenian, Greek-Orthodox, Latin and Nestorian Christian churches as hanging lamps, and occasional use in European churches as reliquaries and other types of containers may have drawn on shared Christological symbolism.⁸² The praise of the aesthetic qualities of ostrich eggs and their use as metaphors for female beauty in Arabic poetry, contrasted with the moralising entries of Christian bestiaries, which focused on the description of the ostrich forgetting its eggs after being distracted by the star Virgilia, urging people to follow its example by abandoning the world and focusing on heaven.⁸³ And whilst the wild ostrich hunt represented a very different experience to the bird's occasionally recorded confinement in European 'menageries', in the late-medieval Arabian Peninsula and North African Caliphates, the bird had become associated with aristocratic culture. Its meat, plumage and leather were highly valued and exported as far as

⁸¹ Pluskowski. "Narwhales."

⁸² Nile Green, "Ostrich eggs and peacock feathers: Sacred objects as cultural exchange between Christianity and Islam," *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, 18/1(2006): 27-78.

⁸³ Berthold Laufer, "Ostrich egg-shell cups of Mesopotamia and the ostrich in ancient and modern times," Field Museum of Natural History, Department of Anthropology, Chicago, Leaflet no. 23 (1926).

China as well as into Europe – also targeted at aristocratic markets.⁸⁴ The similarities and contrasts between source regions and destinations in the exploitation of select animal species, outlined above in the example of the ostrich, remains poorly understood. This is certainly one topic, in the study of both human-animal relations and inter-cultural contact in the Middle Ages, which will significantly benefit from future inter-regional and inter-disciplinary research.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 4.

THE BEAST OF MUHU: A HYBRID FROM THE PERIPHERY

Tom Pettitt and Kadri Tüür

The organizers of this workshop on the Edges of the Medieval World having opted to hold it on the edge of modern Europe, participants duly steeled themselves for the encounter with the creatures of this particular periphery, rumoured to range from wood-ticks and adders, through elk and bears, to wolves. Nothing however had prepared them for the “beast of Muhu,” lurking within the very venue of their deliberations, a disturbing hybrid of the human and the animal (indeed of more than one animal). In what follows its characteristics, habits and environment are surveyed by a workshop participant with an interest in folk customs, and the curator of the museum which is currently the beast’s home.

Among its display of farm implements and other bygoners the Folklife Museum¹ in the village of Koguva on the island of Muhu, off the coast of Estonia, boasts a well-preserved “New Year’s Goat” (*näärisoke*; fig. 1). Closely related to analogous Scandinavian traditions such as the Christmas Goat (*juleged*),² and more distantly to English customary beast-figures such as the Old Tup and the Wild and Hooden Horses,³ the New Year’s Goat has been recorded in hundreds of communities, particularly in the western regions of the Estonian mainland and the Baltic islands (Muhu and the larger Saaremaa).⁴ It is encountered more frequently in the records than analogous customs involving figures representing storks, geese, or bears.

¹ The official name is Muhu Museum: it also commemorates the major Estonian author, Juhan Smuul (1922-1971), whose family previously owned the homestead, Tooma, in which the museum is housed. For more information consult its website <http://www.muhumuuseum.ee>. This article is illustrated by photographs taken by Anu Mänd of Tallinn University in August 2006, to whom our thanks.

² See Nils Keyland, *Julbröd, Julbockar och Staffjanssång* (Stockholm: Nordiska Museet, 1919); Iørn Piø, *Julens Hvem Hvad Hvor* (Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag, 1977), 77-78; Olav Bø, *Vår Norske Jul* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1970), 139-148.

³ See Percy Maylam, *The Hooden Horse: An East Kent Christmas Custom* (Canterbury: the author, 1909); E. C. Cawte, *Ritual Animal Disguise* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1978).

⁴ The following account of the custom in general is based on the standard account in Estonian, Mall Hiemäe (ed.), *Eesti rahvakalender VII* (Tartu: Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia, Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjan-



Fig. 1: The New Year's Goat

Within an overall cluster of winter “going a-goating” (*sokku tegema*) customs the closely-related tradition of the Christmas Goat mostly involves the beast wandering haphazardly around the community alone and engaging in mischief with those it encounters, while the New Year's Goat custom, with which the Koguva figure is most probably connected, is a house-visit custom involving a rather more systematic perambulation of farmhouses in the performers' own community and immediately adjacent villages during the first days of the new year, say up to Epiphany. Sometimes led on a rope by a “goatherd” (who might wield a stick but was otherwise uncostumed), the goat

dusmuuseum, 1995), 70-71 and 121-132. There is a one-volume abridgement in German, *Der estnische Volkskalender* (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 1998), see 273-277. The areas of Estonia referred to are those least affected by (late-medieval) German and (modern) Russian cultural domination; on the other hand they were very much within the Scandinavian sphere of influence deep into the early-modern period. There is a substantial and systematic discussion of the New Year's Goat in Ülo Tedre's “Masks and Mumming Traditions in Estonia,” forthcoming in *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area*, ed. Terry Gunnell, Acta Academiae Regiae Gustavi Adolphi XCVIII (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2007), 367-448, at 397-409. Analogous figures feature in other regional surveys of this significant new contribution to the study of folk customs.

(on occasion one of a group of goat-figures) would enter a farmhouse uninvited and make a nuisance of itself, prodding people (especially girls) with its horns and sprinkling them with water – for example by dipping its tail in a bucket and shaking it. As a rule no songs or other entertainment were offered, beyond the goat's bleating as it rampaged around, and the goatherd's request that it be watered and fed (with oats), effectively a demand for refreshment and largesse.

The mischief-making (which the goatherd attempted to keep within bounds) stopped when the refreshment and largesse were duly provided, the former mainly in the form of beer and hazel nuts, perhaps also apples, beans and cookies. Largesse (largely from the girls of the household) would take the form of gloves, socks, ribbons, belts, tobacco pouches, etc., the goatherd carrying a bag for the receipt of the gifts.⁵ There is one report, as it happens from Muhu, that the goat, like many of his fellows in other countries (e.g. the English Old Tup and Old Horse) was subjected to a ceremonial slaying, in this case specifically as a prerequisite to the beer drinking, which was conceived of as “drinking the goat's blood,” the beer (supplied by the host) poured into a bucket beneath the goat's throat as it was slaughtered.⁶

As occasion permitted or warranted, the man within the “goat” might doff his costume for a while to properly enjoy this hospitality – that is, there was no sense of his identity having to be concealed, or the hosts trying to identify him, as in some winter season house-visit customs. The visit of the goat was generally welcomed, partly with a sense that it would bring good luck for the coming year (if with no explicit magical overtones), mainly as an occasion for drinking and card-playing and not least socializing between the girls of the households visited and the exclusively male performers.

In its construction the Koguva goat⁷ conforms pretty well to Estonian traditions in general: a frame consisting of a semi-circular hoop and a bar with a tail at one end and a head at the other: the achieving of the beast would be completed by the performer placing the hoop between his legs and the bar across his shoulder (obliged to bend forward somewhat in consequence), the whole covered with a sheepskin coat worn inside out (that is, with the wool outwards). What seems to have been the most usual form of this basic structure involved the link between the ends of the hoop actually comprising a rope which, as in a bow, helped to bend the pole forming the hoop: the block of wood forming the basis of the head, and the tail (a whisk of birchen twigs used in a sauna), were then tied to the respective ends of the hoop. The Koguva figure achieves the same result with a birch-broom: its twigs provide a ready-made tail, and the hoop is tied to the shaft (whose length is 120 cm) by strings. The hoop itself,

⁵ Such a “bagman” also accompanied Scandinavian customary visitors and English morris dancers.

⁶ Ago Rullingo, *Muhumaa* (Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 2001), 524.

⁷ When not based on direct observation, details in what follows derive from the museum's register of acquisitions.

which is made of juniper wood, is permanently bent, rather than being pulled into shape by the rope: wear-marks indicate it had previously been part of the frame of a fishing-net.⁸ This is a very robust construction, more suitable, according to a local informant, for the beast's main task of butting people with its head and horns than alternative constructions in which the head of the performer, encased in a helmet, represented that of the beast.⁹



Fig. 2: The head of the New Year's Goat

The Koguva head (fig. 2) is a small block of wood, 30 cm long and narrowing towards the lower end, to which are affixed two black cow horns of ca 23 cm length (elsewhere goat horns might be used, or they might be carved from wood or con-

⁸ Juniper is very common in the region, and hooped poles of similar dimensions provided the frames of several items baskets on display in the museum.

⁹ A relative (born 1949) of Kadri Tüür, from the village of Tamse, interviewed 2006.

structed from twisted straw). The face is a broad strip of sheepskin, wool outwards, from which there protrudes a tongue made of a 9 cm long triangular piece of red felt cut from a boot (red felt boots were used in the area during the Soviet period). According to the museum register of acquisitions three strips of sheepskin dangle from the jaw, representing the goat's beard (which elsewhere might be made of tow, flax or horse-tail), but observation suggests that two of these at least are actually continuations of the skin forming the face. Each of the two eyes comprises two buttons: in the middle of the larger has been affixed a second, smaller button with an inscription identifying it as deriving from denim trousers produced at a factory in Tartu, Estonia (virtually the only factory in the USSR permitted to produce these degenerate Western garments).

The museum's records indicate that the beast was originally constructed in the 1950's by Albert Noor from the village of Mäla in southern Muhu. Prior to donating it to the museum in 1999 he had undertaken a few repairs, not least replacing the original tongue, which had been a 30 cm. length of a red, pre-war bicycle inner tube, the metal valve dangling at the end. The need for repair was doubtless due to the pretty intense deployment of the goat not merely at Christmas –New Year but also at youth gatherings celebrating the completion of work-tasks: there was a general tendency for the goat-figure to attach itself to other seasonal observances, notably St Martin's Eve (10th November) and St Catherine's day (25th November). Albert Noor reported that this particular goat's most mischievous achievement was to push a window out of its frame.¹⁰

Folklorists can no longer take for granted that modern folk traditions, as "survivals" of ancient cult-practices, must inevitably have existed in the intervening period, but with regard to such winter-visit customs, there is a good deal of evidence suggesting continuity between the late-medieval and modern periods,¹¹ and Michael Camille has noted striking similarities between the beasts figuring in the customs and the hybrid babewyns cavorting, appropriately, in the margins of the Luttrell Psalter.¹² Perhaps the most striking and convincing antecedent is the stag figure which appears in the margins of a fourteenth-century manuscript of *Li romans d'Alexandre* more famous for its illustration of dancers wearing beast-masks.¹³ Here the frame is clearly

¹⁰ Albert Noor also reported that the use of a u-shaped piece of wood in the frame – more often from a horse-harness – was normal in the area: the head could also be made from a complete cow skull (cow heads were boiled to produce gelatine, leaving a clean skull).

¹¹ Thomas Pettitt, "This man is Pyramus': A Pre-History of the English Mummers' Plays," *Medieval English Theatre* 22 (2002 for 2000): 70-99.

¹² Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), ch. 5, "The Lord's Folk: Masks, Mummers and Monsters."

¹³ Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 264, f. 70r., reproduced at the website <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msbodl264>. See also *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, ed. Boris Ford, vol. II, *Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), colour pl. 4.

constituted by a man, bending forward, and the pole which he grasps, topped by a head with two impressive horns, the beast's three legs comprising the other end of this pole and the man himself (there doesn't seem to be a tail). He is covered by a shaggy skin, but his face can be clearly discerned peeping out at the front. The beast is accompanied by a musician playing a fife and drum, so may be dancing.

At the other end of the chronological spectrum, New Year's goaters have certainly been out and about on Muhu as recently as the late 1970s, and traditional new-year perambulations are still performed by locals (predominantly young men). A goat was photographed on the neighbouring island of Saaremaa in 1993.¹⁴ On the edge of the world, the unlit, unpaved, tree-lined avenues between the moss-covered stone walls around the thatched homesteads in Muhu's villages, not least in the darkness of a Nordic winter, certainly constitute an ideal habitat: and as a "goat" that is part man, part cow, part sheep, part broom, button, boot or bicycle, the beast of Muhu is a worthy descendent of the hybrid monsters of the *mappae mundi*, its aggressive mid-winter irruption into the domestic world of the village households perhaps the closest we can come to the sense of threat felt by a medieval world haunted by the monsters at its edges.

¹⁴ Ants Vüres and Elle Vunder (ed.), *Eesti rahvakultuur* (Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 1998), 453.

TIBI SILENS LAUS: SILENCE AT THE EDGE OF LANGUAGE

Lucie Doležalová

After expounding his version of negative theology and concluding that no positive statement can be made about God's essence, Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) opened chapter 59 of the first book of his *Guide of the Perplexed* with a question:

Someone may ask and say: If there is no device leading to the apprehension of the true reality of His essence and if demonstration proves that it can only be apprehended that He exists and that it is impossible, as has been demonstrated, to ascribe to Him affirmative attributes, in what respect can there be superiority or inferiority between those who apprehend Him?¹

Within the chapter, Maimonides argues that it is possible to distinguish between the levels of apprehension of God. Among other things, he says:

The most apt phrase concerning this subject is the dictum occurring in the Psalms [65:2], "Silence is praise to thee," which interpreted signifies: silence with regard to you is praise. This is the most perfectly put phrase regarding this matter. For of whatever we say intending to magnify and exalt, on the one hand we find that it can have some application to Him, may He be exalted, and on the other we perceive in it some deficiency. Accordingly, silence and limiting oneself to the apprehensions of the intellect are more appropriate – just as the perfect ones have enjoined when they said: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah." [Psalms 4:5].²

My attention was caught by the role of silence in the problem of the ineffability of God, the impossibility of grasping Him, of successfully describing His nature in words. Could silence indeed provide a solution, could it be the most appropriate way of praising Him? The idea of silence as praise makes sense; at the edge of language, in a situation where words are unable to express reality, silence appears to be the most adequate solution.

¹ *Moses Maimonides: The Guide of the Perplexed*, vol. 1, tr. and intro. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 137 (hereafter: *The Guide*).

² *The Guide* 1, 139-140.

But silence is ambiguous and thus tricky, too – silence is everything and nothing. What Maimonides describes is a conscious, decided silence, silence as a strategy, which, however, exactly due to being silence, that is, lack of speech, cannot be (from the outside) distinguished from confused or silly silence. Silence has great potential but the expectations it sets may turn out to be false – remember the classical phrase *Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses* (If you had remained silent, you would have remained a philosopher), which evokes an image of a silent person looking very wise but turning out to be dumb once he opens his mouth. Because silence surely can, besides having content (like being a solution of the wise to the real edge of language – God), also be empty (like a strategy of the ignorant wishing to look clever).

Medieval Christian theologians do not mention silence as a fitting praise to God. That can be explained very simply: while Psalm 65 quoted by Maimonides really says in Hebrew “silence is praise to Thee,” in the Septuagint the “silence” is completely omitted and, consequently, it is missing from the Jerome’s first translation of the Psalm, which has: *te decet hymnus Deus in Sion* (you deserve a hymn, God in Zion). The Church Fathers used this translation, and thus no comment on silence as praise to God appears in Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmos* and other early influential Christian writings.

Jerome’s second translation based on the Hebrew Bible reads: *Tibi silens laus, Deus in Sion* (Silent praise to you, God in Zion). It is close to the Hebrew and may seem to be its equivalent, but actually it is not. Silence is not the subject of the clause, it does not say that silence (as such) should be practiced as praise to God, but that praise to God should be silent, that is, not pronounced aloud. The silence is also skipped in later vernacular translations of the Bible. The King James’ version reads: *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion*, the Bible of the French King Louis II: *Avec confiance, ô Dieu! On te louera dans Sion*. Only Luther’s Bible is based on Hebrew in this case and has: *Gott, man lobt dich in der Stille zu Zion*, which, however, can still be interpreted as praying silently with words. The case is similar with contemporary translations – they include silence in some way, but not clearly as the way to praise God.³ Thus, it could be argued that the theoretical possibility of establishing silence as a Christian theological concept was not realised partly due to the mistranslation of the relevant Psalm. But could it indeed have been so?

The closest to providing a conceptual background to silence is Augustine with his “rhetoric of silence.”⁴ Otherwise, silence is present in the Christian context but belongs more to practice (especially monastic) than to theology.⁵ Silence is an important

³ For instance, the Czech Ecumenical Bible has: *Ztišením se sluší tebe chválit, Bože, na Sijónu* (It is appropriate to praise you by silencing, God in Zion).

⁴ On this concept, see the influential article by Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, “St. Augustine’s Rhetoric of Silence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962): 175-196.

⁵ See Paul F. Gehl, “*Competens silentium*: Varieties of monastic silence in the medieval West,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 18 (1987): 125-160.

part of self-discipline, avoiding the sin of the lie. Together with seclusion, silence is a way to approach God – one is encouraged to silence the outside influences and concentrate on one's heart, to communicate with God through silent meditation. This monastic silence is, however, based on praying in private rather than public space, encouraged by Jesus (Matthew 6:1-4). So, again, it does not mean pronouncing words aloud rather than acknowledging that they cannot be found.

In a way, silence as man's approach to God can be as unsatisfying as God's silence toward man. God's silence has always included the threat of His absence. There seems to be a natural fear of silence as a lack, a natural need for words in order to understand.

This tendency is nicely mirrored in ways God was spoken about. While virtually all medieval theologians acknowledged that one cannot grasp divine essence in this life, some kind of positive definition was needed at least on the level of basic education. Thus, for example, the *Elucidarium*⁶ by Honorius Augustodunensis (ca. 1106-1135), a set of disciple's questions and a master's answers concerning the Bible, opens with:

D. Dicitur quod nemo sciat quid sit Deus, et valde videtur absurdum adorare quod nesciamus. Ab ipso ergo exordium sumamus, et in primis dic mihi quid sit Deus? – M. Quantum homini licet scire, Deus est substantia spiritualis, tam inestimabilis pulchritudinis, tam ineffabilis suavitatis, ut angeli, qui septuplo solem sua vincunt pulchritudine, jugiter desiderent in eum insatiabiliter prospicere.

[Student: It is said that no one knows what God is and it seems very absurd to worship something what we do not know. So let us begin with this [problem], and tell me first: what is God? – Master: As much as man is allowed to know, God is a spiritual substance of such inestimable beauty, such unutterable sweetness that the angels whose beauty surpasses seven times the beauty of the sun, all together desire to watch him insatiably.]⁷

The text abounds in such answers, which would have seemed extremely naive to the theologians of Honorius' time but would have satisfied common people's needs. I am convinced that it was exactly this characteristic of the text which was responsible for its extreme popularity during the Middle Ages.⁸ At a time when theological debates come

⁶ For further details, see Yves Lefèvre, *L'Elucidarium et les Lucidaires*, Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 124 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1954).

⁷ *Patrologia Latina* 172, col. 1109; the English translation is mine.

⁸ Over 400 Latin manuscripts have survived. In addition, the text was translated into almost all vernacular languages. See Dagmar Gottschall, *Das Elucidarium des Honorius Augustodunensis. Untersuchungen zu seiner Überlieferungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte im deutschsprachigen Raum mit Ausgabe der niederdeutschen Übersetzung*, Texte und Textgeschichte 33 (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 1992); Ernstpeter Ruhe, *Elucidarium und Lucidaires. Zur Rezeption des Werkes von Honorius Augustodunensis in der Romania und in England* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1993); Monika Türk, 'Lucidaire de grant sapientie'. *Untersuchung und Edition der altfranzösischen Übersetzung des Elucidarium von Honorius Augustodunensis* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000).

too close to the edge of language, this text offers answers that are simple and clear even if not quite correct theologically. Without any elementary positive description, there would be no difference between God and nothing.

A text called *Sermo de sancto Nemine* (Sermon on Saint Nobody) is a very different example of an edge of language, and may seem completely unrelated, but I hope will illustrate well the point I want to make. Saint Nobody appeared first in the thirteenth century and became quite a popular saint; there are three versions of his life, of different lengths. I present only excerpts from the “short Nemo” as edited and translated by Martha Bayless:

There was a man in the East named Nobody, and that man was like another Job among all the people of the East. For this holy Nobody was great in race and lineage, great in power, great in knowledge, great in mercy and compassion, great in honor and reverence, and great in daring. And all of these things are confirmed in the Holy Scripture.

[...First, on good race and lineage]

Second, this Nobody was great in power. For he opens that which God closes, according to that: *God shutteth and Nobody openeth*... He also builds up what God destroys, Job: *If God pulls down, there is Nobody who can build up*. Likewise he overcomes and conquers God himself, Ecclesiasticus 5: *Nobody conquers God*. Therefore those signs which God performed he is able to do if he likes, as Nicodemus says in the Gospel: *Nobody can do these signs which thou dost*. Likewise he forcefully takes joy from the apostles, whence John: *Your joy Nobody shall take from you*. Indeed, what is more, he steals away the soul of Christ, John: *Nobody taketh my soul away from me*. Likewise, just as no one is able to serve two masters, this one is useful in service... in the Gospel: *Nobody can serve two masters*.

Third, this Nobody was great in knowledge... He was also great in grammar, emulating Priscian, with that man as witness: *I found Nobody my friend*. He was great in arithmetic, according to Revelations: *Nobody could number that multitude*. He was great in music, in Revelations: *Nobody could say the canticle*. He was also a great prophet, according to Matthew: *Nobody is accepted as a prophet in his own country*.

He was also great in mercy and in compassion... Likewise he was merciful to Lazarus the beggar, who asked to be filled with the crumbs which fell from the table and *Nobody gave him*...

And also, so I may bring the account of his dignity to a conclusion, this man, seeing the vanities of this world, ascended to the heavens, according to the

words of the evangelist: *Nobody ascended into heaven*. Which may he deign to bring about for us. Amen.⁹

I suppose the basis of the joke is clear: places from the Bible are quoted in which the word *nemo* (nobody) appears. Nobody is then personified – instead of a negative pronoun it becomes a personal name and the meaning of each Bible quotation is reversed: not nobody, but a man called Nobody can make miracles which nobody (else) can do, and so he is, by definition, the most perfect of all men (and also of all saints), similar only to God himself.

Is it a simple joke with a long tradition (derived from the famous trick Ulysses' played on the Cyclops) or the edge of language? In a way, Saint Nobody is a comic counterpart to God. The impenetrable divine essence functions in negative theology similarly to the word "nobody" in the *Sermo de Sancto Nemine*: while everything is denied of God's essence, God is not "nothing", he is not a negative pronoun but a personification of the unspeakable. The fact that Saint Nobody appears on the same edge of language is clear from interpretations of the text. Several scholars were surprised by the naivety (or even stupidity) of the supposed author of the sermon on Saint Nobody, who, in their opinion, truly believed he traced this special saint in the Bible and faithfully reconstructed his life from it.¹⁰

Texts are sets of words. The meaning is not always clear, especially when all hints are missing. In the case of Saint Nobody, the text of the Bible is not manipulated in any way and the commentary is not forcing strange interpretations. Instead, it applies

⁹ The Latin text in Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: UMP, 1996), 292-294 (hereafter: Bayless, *Parody*); edition based on ms. Brno, Státní oblastní archiv MS E 6, Benedictines of Rajhrad H e 19, ff. 140r-141r from the 15th c.; Bayless' English translation is on p. 300-301: *Vir erat in oriente nomine Nemo, et erat vir ille ut alter Iob inter omnes orientales. Magnus namque erat sanctus iste Nemo in genere et prosapia, magnus in potentia, magnus in scientia, magnus in clementia et in compassione, magnus in bonore et reverentia, et magnus in audacia. Et hec omnia per sacram scripturam comprobantur...*

Secundo iste Nemo fuit magnus in potentia. Nam aperit id quod deus claudit, iuxta illud: Deus claudit et Nemo aperit ... Item edificat quod deus destruit, Iob: Si Deus destruit, Nemo est qui edificat. Item ipsum Deum superat et vincit, Ecclesiastici quinto: Nemo vincit deum. Propterea signa que deus facit ipse facere potest si voluerit, sicut dicit Nicodemus in evangelio: Nemo potest hec signa facere que tu facis. Item gaudium ab apostolis potenter tollit, unde Iohannes: Gaudium vestrum Nemo tollet a vobis. Ymo quod magis est, animam Christi rapit, Iohannes: Animam meam Nemo tollit a me. Item sicut nullus potest duobus dominis servire, ipse servit utiliter, ...in evangelio: Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.

Tertio iste Nemo fuit magnus in scientia... Fuit etiam magnus in grammatica, prisciano se conformans, ipso attestante: Neminem inveni mihi socium. Fuit magnus in aritmetica, iuxta illud Apocalipsis: Nemo poterat numerare turbam hanc. Fuit magnus in musica, in Apocalipsi: Nemo poterat dicere canticum. Fuit etiam magnus propheta, secundum illud Mathei: Nemo propheta acceptus est in patria sua.

Item fuit magnus in clementia et in compassione... Lazaro mendicanti fuit compassus, qui petebat saturari de micis que cadebant de mensa, et Nemo illi dabat ...

Item ut omnem eius dignitatem concludam, iste homo videns vana huius mundi, conscendit ad celestia, iuxta illud evangeliste: Nemo ascendit in celum. Quod nobis patrare dignetur. Amen.

¹⁰ See Bayless, *Parody* 144-145.

the most literal reading possible. The lack of guidance to the reader places the text on the edge – some will laugh, others will take it seriously, all sure about the correctness of their own interpretation.

Silence is even further on the edge; not only hints on the interpretation but truly everything is missing. As a way of communicating with God, silence is efficient. (God knows our thoughts even if we do not put them into words.) But when communicating with people, where there are no words, there is no control of interpretation. Anything that can easily get out of control may fit the parody well, but will never become a universal theological concept.

Thus, whoever wants to exercise control is faced with the task of describing even the ungraspable. While some (like Sapho in Ovid's *Heroides*¹¹) use words to describe the unspeakability of their thoughts and feelings, those who experienced real unspeakability remained silent. But that makes their stories quite difficult to approach for us.

¹¹ Sapho spend several lines describing the impossibility of expressing the depth of her sorrow with words. Among *Heroides*, it is exactly the authenticity of Sapho's letter to Phaon which has been put into question. In this edition it is also included as of uncertain authorship.

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In the Middles Ages, the edges of someone's world could carry various meanings and represent different things. They might, on the one hand, have been situated in far-away regions, mainly in the north and east, lands most often only known from hearsay and inhabited by strange beings: humans who had their faces on their chest, did not have a mouth, or had the heads of dogs. On the other hand, the edges of an individual's world could also just mean the borders of the community they lived in, borders that they may not have had a chance to cross their whole lives long.

These varieties of the edges of the medieval world were the topic of an international workshop held on the Estonian island of Muhu—itself a place that could easily be associated with the topic of this meeting—in 2006. Specialists from eight European countries offer their insightful ideas and particular perspectives on the different edges of the medieval world and contribute to a discussion that is rapidly gaining importance for Medieval Studies.



Centre for Medieval Studies,
Tallinn University



Central European University
Department of Medieval Studies

Central European University Press
Budapest—New York



ISBN 978-963-9776-45-6



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